

NOTICES ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE DRAMA,
AND OTHER POPULAR AMUSEMENTS,
CHIEFLY IN THE SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES,
INCIDENTALLY ILLUSTRATING SHAKESPEARE AND HIS
COTEMPORARIES,
EXTRACTED FROM THE CHAMBERLAINS' ACCOUNTS
AND OTHER MANUSCRIPTS OF THE
BOROUGH OF LEICESTER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
WILLIAM KELLY



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JOHN RUSSELL SMITH,
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P R E F A C E

A SMALL portion of the contents of the following pages has already appeared in print, as part of a paper on the "Ancient Records of Leicester," read before our local Literary and Philosophical Society, in the year 1851, and subsequently printed in the volume of the society's transactions. In now embodying the substance of those brief remarks on the subject in the present greatly extended work, that portion has been almost entirely re-written, and the extracts from the records there referred to, as well as the many additional ones now appearing for the first time, have been carefully collated with the original entries.

The chief source from whence the materials for the following work have been derived is the series of Accounts of the Town Chamberlains, and my attention was first directed to them under the following circumstances —

In the year 1847 I undertook, as a labour of love, in conjunction with Mr James Thompson, (who was then collecting materials for his valuable "History of Leicester"), to arrange the MSS in the Borough Muniment-room, which had for very many

years been lying untouched in a state of great disorder and neglect. Our offer having been promptly accepted by the Town Council, who—properly appreciating the value of these records of our past history, which, if once allowed to perish, no wealth could replace—unanimously voted the sum of money required for binding them, and our labours then commenced my colleague undertaking the arrangement of the interesting series of Hall Papers (now forming twenty-four folio volumes, beginning with the year 1583), whilst the Chamberlains' Accounts (now collected into thirty-eight volumes) fell to my lot. These accounts were at the time lying in a confused mass, mixed with other papers, in a corner of the muniment-room, a prey to rats and saturated with moisture, caused by the overflowings of a water butt filtrating through the porous stone wall of the building, owing to which the contents of some of the documents were hopelessly effaced, whilst others were rotting away and crumbled under the touch.

Whilst occupied at home during my leisure hours in drying and arranging the accounts, I was naturally led to peruse them, and I was at once struck by the interesting nature of their contents, and, on examination, was surprised to find how little (as compared with the mass of information which they contained) they had been consulted by our local historians.

This, it is fair to assume, could only be accounted for by the jealous care with which all access to the Corporation archives had been guarded prior to the year 1836, when the Reformed Corporation was elected.

This induced me to transcribe a considerable num-

ber of entries on various subjects, some of which formed the groundwork of the paper above-mentioned, others were worked up into a series of papers on "Royal Progresses to Leicester," read before the same society, those relating to the siege of the town in 1645 were printed in the Appendix to Mr Thompson's "History of Leicester," whilst some very curious particulars respecting the visitations of the Plague were included by Mr Buck in an interesting paper on "Epidemics in the Middle Ages."

Some months ago my MS collection of transcripts having passed through the hands of a learned friend—than whom few have rendered more important services in illustration of the dramatic literature of Shakespeare and his age, and of our earlier poets—he strongly urged upon me the desirability of collecting together and printing every entry relating to the stage and other amusements, deeming many of those which he read curious and valuable illustrations, and it is to this cause that the preparation of the present work is owing.

Feeling that, however curious and valuable the extracts from the records might be to the well-skilled antiquary, to the general reader they would appear but as the dry, and possibly repulsive bones of a skeleton, in the Introduction the writer has "tried his 'prentice hand" at an attempt to clothe these bones with flesh, and to present them before the eye with, at least, some appearance of vitality and motion.

In addition to the Chamberlains' Accounts (which commence in the year 1517), entries have also been transcribed from the Hall Papers the Hall Books, and the Town Book of Acts.

With a single exception—the very curious "bill"

in 1534 relating to Robin Hood—the body of the work is derived exclusively from the Corporation archives, but many curious particulars, illustrative of the subject, drawn from other original MSS (as the Churchwardens' Accounts of Melton Mowbray and those of St Martin's, Leicester), are embodied in the Introduction.

The only classification which has been attempted has been to place the extracts, as far as practicable, under the years to which they respectively relate, for, as the Town Accounts range from “the feast of St Michael the Archangel” in one year, to the same festival in the succeeding one, they comprise, in every instance, portions of two years, and from the absence of dates, except occasionally, it is often impossible to decide with certainty whether particular entries belong to the latter part of the one year, or the beginning of the next.

Where not otherwise indicated within brackets, the whole of the entries are taken from these accounts.

W. K.

Leicester, April 2nd, 1864



INTRODUCTION

HE town of Leicester, although, unlike its co-equals in antiquity, the cities of Chester and Coventry, it has not had its name associated with any series of those rude and unartistic productions of the early English stage which have come down to us, was, undoubtedly, for several centuries, the frequent scene of those dramatic spectacles, which, having their origin in the Middle Ages, under the name of Miracle Plays or Mysteries, reached their culminating-point in "the merrie days of good Queen Bess," when the immortal works of a Beaumont, a Fletcher, a Jonson, and, above all, a Shakespeare, gave a vitality and *verasemblance* to the stage which it had not previously attained, and made it, indeed, "hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature," showing "the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure"

Although it was in England that the earliest representation of these religious plays is recorded to have taken place, it was not until the reign of Edward III that they were generally acted in English, and consequently, up to that period, and indeed for some time subsequently, the performers were monks,

or persons attached to the Church. Thus, Chaucer, in his description of the parish-clerk "joly Absolon," in "The Miller's Tale," says —

"Somtime to shew his lightnesse and maistrie
He plaith Herode on a skaffold hie"

By the fifteenth century, however, as will be seen by extracts from our local records, and other authorities, many of the plays were performed by laymen

The Mysteries and Miracle Plays were distinct in character, although, even as early as the fourteenth century, there appears to have been some confusion in this country in the application of the terms. The former, being founded on Scripture subjects, and intended to set forth the mysteries of the Christian revelation, were thus designated *mysteria*, or *mysteries*, whilst the latter derived their title from being representations of the *miracles* said to have been performed by the saints of the Roman Catholic Church, and these were the most popular representations. They were common in London in 1170, and as early as 1119, or, according to Matthew Paris, nine years earlier, the miracle-play of St. Katherine was represented at Dunstable, and which, as we learn from Bulæus, was even then no novelty

The earliest examples of these compositions now known, are three plays written in France, in the beginning of the twelfth century, by Hilarius, an Englishman and disciple of the famous Abelard, the subjects of which are the raising of Lazarus, a miracle of St. Nicholas, and the history of Daniel¹

¹ Wright's Introduction to the "Chester Plays," p. 6

We have no means of ascertaining at what period dramatic spectacles were first introduced into Leicester, but the earliest references to them which we find in our municipal and parochial records, towards the close of the fifteenth century, evidently show that they were in full operation at that time, as they had been, in all probability, long before

In an age when nearly all the laity were illiterate, these plays, the characters and incidents in which were, as we have seen, drawn from the Old or New Testament history, or from the legends of saints, became the readiest means in the hands of the clergy of imparting religious instruction to their flocks, by presenting before their eyes, as it were, the very persons and scenes recorded in Scripture, and thus, in a dramatic form, impressing those events more powerfully upon the popular mind. Indeed, so closely was the Biblical narrative adhered to, that in representations of the Mystery of the Creation of the World (if we are to judge from the explicit stage direction, "stand naked," and the play itself) there seems no reason to doubt that Adam and Eve appeared upon the stage in a state of nudity, and Adam is described as presenting a fig-leaf apion to Eve. In reference hereto, Walton, in his "History of English Poetry,"¹ observes "that this extiaordinary spectacle was beheld by a numerious company of both sexes, with great complacency, they had the authority of Scripture for such a representation, and they gave matters just as they found them in the third chapter of Genesis." Mr. Thomas Wright, however, in a note on this subject, in the "Chester Plays,"²

¹ Vol 1, p 244² Vol 1, p 238

edited by him for the Shakespeare Society, doubts the accuracy of this assumption. He says — “I am strongly inclined to think that this is altogether an error, that the direction is merely figurative, and that the persons who represented our first parents were only to be supposed to be in a state of nudity. Still, that part of the performance which related to the fig-leaves could not be otherwise than what would now be considered very indecorous.”

The opinion of Mr Wright on every subject of antiquarian research is worthy of all respect, but still, taking the explicit stage direction, &c., coupled with the habit which had long universally prevailed, and which was continued to a much later period, of retiring to rest perfectly naked (several persons sleeping in the same room), and other gross manners of the people, together with the coarse and indecent language frequently put into the mouths of the female characters in the so-called religious plays, the question is still open to considerable doubt whether the earliest commentators were not correct in their opinion. Upon this subject we may adduce the following extraordinary testimony, which, if it is to be believed, is a strong confirmation of the assertion being literally true. A sermon, preached by John Stockwood, in 1578, contains the following extremely strange and curious piece of information, on a similar practice, even at that late period — “If you resorte,” says he, “to the Theatre, the Curtaine, and other places of playes in the Citye, you shall, on the Lorde’s daye, haue these places so full as possibly they can throng insomuche that in some places they [the players] shame not, in the tyme of divine service to come and dance about the churche, and

without to have naked men dauncing in nettes, which is most filthie, for the heathen, that had never further knowledge than the light of nature, haue counted it shamefull for a player to come on the stage without a slop ”¹ One would suppose that this, to us, startling assertion would not have been made openly from the pulpit if it had no foundation in fact

A regular series of these plays was frequently performed by the various trading companies of our old towns, as at Chester, where the series commenced with the Creation and Fall of Lucifer, and ended with the General Judgment of the World, and Stow, in his “Survey of London,”² informs us that, in 1390, the parish-clerks of London played interludes at Skinner’s Well, “which play continued three days together, the king, queen and nobles being present,” and, also, that in 1409, “they played a play which lasted eight days, and was of matter from the creation of the world”

Of the popularity of these plays, and the religious processions, partaking more or less of the same dramatic character, we have ample evidence in the works of our early writers. Thus Chaucer, among many other allusions to them, represents his Wife of Bath amusing herself with them during Lent, in her husband’s absence —

“ Therfore made I my visitations
To vigiles, and to processions,
To prechings eke, and to thise pilgrimages,
To playes of miracles, and mariages,
And wered upon my gay skarlet gites ”³

¹ See Mr Collier’s Introduction to Northbrooke’s “Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes,” reprinted by the Shakespeare Society, p 14

² Ed 1842, p 7

³ Gowns

The clergy, it would seem, however, were not unanimous as to the propriety of these public dramatic performances, for in an Anglo-French poem entitled the "Manuel de Peché," written about the middle of the thirteenth century, and which has been attributed by some writers to Robert Grossetete, the famous Archdeacon of Leicester, and subsequently Bishop of Lincoln, a violent attack is made upon them

Although the Mysteries and Miracle Plays, even at an early period, were not unfrequently performed upon moveable scaffolds or stages, termed "pageants," in the public streets and in cemeteries (and this became more especially the case after lay actors belonging to the trading companies, or guilds, began to perform them), yet, having a religious object, they were usually represented in the churches, and even during divine service on particular festivals indeed, there were some who held that it was a sin to witness the performance of the mysteries of the resurrection or birth of Christ on highways or greens, but that it was lawful to do so in churches, thus —

" He may yn the cherche, thrugh thys resun,
 Pley the resurreccyun ,
 And he may pleye wythoutyn plyght
 Howe god was bore yn thole nyght,
 To make men to beleve stedfastly
 That he lyght yn the vyrgyne Mary
 Zyf¹ thou do hyt in weyys or greynys
 A syght of synne truly hyt semys "²

On account of their religious origin and ordinary place of representation, we have thus rather to look

¹ If

² Robert de Brunne's translation of the "Manuel de Peché"

to our parochial than to our municipal records for the most numerous entries relating to these early dramatic displays

The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Mary de Castro afford us the most interesting of these particulars. Unfortunately, however, we can only refer to these records at second-hand, the originals having long since disappeared from the parish chest, and (with the single exception of the account for the year 1490, recently recovered by the writer) were sold by auction in London some thirty years ago, and all traces of them appear to be lost. We are thus indebted to the transcripts made from the accounts, in the last century, by the Reverend Samuel Carte, vicar of St Martin's, for what information we possess respecting their contents.

We learn that a solemn procession took place annually, on Whit-Monday, from the church of St Mary within the Castle to St Margaret's without the walls of the town. The image of the Virgin Mary, which, at other times, richly clothed and crowned, stood in a tabernacle, or shrine, with a candlestick and a light continually burning before it, was, on these occasions, carried through the streets under a canopy, borne by four persons, and preceded by minstrels playing upon the harp and other instruments. Then followed twelve persons representing the twelve apostles, each of whom had the name of the apostle whom he personated written on parchment and fixed on his bonnet. The virgins of the parish took part in the procession, and its effect was heightened by banners and streamers flaunting in the breeze, one of which is described as "King Edward's standard," another as the "Trinity banner,"

and a third as "the great streamer of silk," and which were borne by fourteen men

Thus composed, and accompanied, doubtless, by the priests and canons of the collegiate church, the procession in honour of the Virgin left the precincts of that once proud castle—by turns the residence of the Beaumonts, the De Montforts, and the Plantagenets—and, in the early summer morning, wending its way along the quaint old streets, lined on either side by picturesque timber houses, whose doors and overhanging windows, story above story, were crowded with spectators, proceeded by the High Cross, and, leaving the town by the North Gate, finally, after passing St John's Cross at its entrance, traversed the *Sancta Via*, or Holy Way—the Sanvey-gate of modern times—and entered the church of St Margaret, where oblations were made at the high altar. These consisted, in part, of two pairs of gloves, one pair said to be for God, and the other for St Thomas of India. On returning to St Mary's, after the conclusion of the ceremony, the representatives of the apostles, the banner-bearers, minstrels and others, who had assisted at it, were either remunerated for their services in money, or, as was more usual, regaled at the expense of the parish—for many years a calf having been provided for that purpose, which, in 1513, cost 2s 4d. A breakfast provided in one instance (1525) consisted of half a calf, and three calves' heads and two plucks, with ale, &c.

Many curious particulars connected with this ceremony have been rescued from oblivion in Mr Carte's extracts, but as they consist simply of a selection from the various items of expense incurred by the

parish on these occasions, we know not whether this annual spectacle, gorgeous, no doubt, in its character (for it was customary to lend hallowed vestments, as well as horses, harness, &c, from the churches and monasteries for dramatic representations), was merely a *religious procession*, or if any performance, in dumb-show or otherwise, took place at intervals during its progress through the streets.

Nichols¹ is of opinion that a work in MS., written by Master Richard de Leicester (who flourished at the end of the thirteenth century, and who is described by Leland as "a great clerk"), entitled "De Articulorum Symboli distributione secundum numerum Apostolorum," and which was formerly in the Sion Library, might, if it could be examined, really prove to contain particulars illustrative of this spectacle. We have not, however, been able to learn whether this work is now in existence.

In the earliest of the parochial accounts—that for the year 1490—we find the following entries relating to this custom —

“ Item, payd on Wytsunmūdy for þe postulls
& all manl thyngs 11^s v.^d,”

and—

“ Item, receyuyd at Saynt Margarets v^d”

(on making the oblation), and similar entries occur in subsequent years among the rest, a payment of 3*s* 4*d* being made in 1493 "for bread, ale, flesh, &c, for the apostles and others" On various occasions payments were also made for writing the names of

¹ "Hist. Leices," vol. 1, p. 314, note

the apostles on parchment, for pins, points, tucking-strings, and whip-cord, for the gloves presented at St Margaret's, for repairing "King Edward's standard," and other banners, &c, and also, occasionally, payments to the twelve apostles, the four bearers of the canopy, the fourteen banner-bearers, the virgins, minstrels, and others, as well as the customary annual charges for bread, ale, powdered beef,¹ veal, spice, dressing, fire, &c, incurred in feasting them

In that curious and scarce work, Sharp's "Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries anciently performed at Coventry,"² attention has been directed to these extracts, although, repeating an error in Nichols's "History of Leicestershire,"³ from which he quotes them, and in which numerous entries are misplaced prior to 1544 (in which year the accounts of St Martin's actually commence), that writer has misappropriated them to that church, instead of St Mary's, to which they really relate

They are referred to as presenting several remarkable coincidences with the annual procession of the Fraternity of the Corpus Christi Gild at Coventry

In that ceremony a canopy of gold tissue was borne by four burgesses of the city over the Sacrament, or *Corpus Christi*, with six children, bearing as many torches, on each side of it, and in the pro-

¹ According to Mr Tom, this was a favourite dish with a very elevated personage He sings —

"The man in the moon drinks claret,
Eats powder'd beef, turnip, and carrot,
But a cup of old Malaga sack
Will fire the bush at his back"

² 4to, 1825, p 166, note

³ Vol 1, p 569

cession were personated the Virgin Mary, wearing a crown of silver-gilt, the angel Gabriel bearing the lily, the twelve apostles with torches of wax, amongst whom James and Thomas "of Inde" received double wages, and eight virgins with St Katherine and St Margaret. The members of the Trinity Gild joined in the procession, and added to its embellishments with their torches decorated with banners, whilst there, as at Leicester, the spectacle was also attended with music, as a charge of 3*s* 4*d* occurs for the waists, and a "breakfast was provided for the members of the Gild, and a part, at least, of the actors, *viz*, the apostles"¹

The "remarkable coincidences," referred to by Mr Sharp, are increased by the fact, that in the wide south aisle of St Mary's Church, in this town, was held the religious guild of the Holy Trinity, the members of which, doubtless, as at Coventry, also joined with their banners, crosses, &c, in the procession on Whit-Monday, although no record of it remains, whilst in the account for 1499 is an entry of a payment of four marks for "*painting St James* and undersetting the body of the church there, and making the tabernacle," and it is thus also very probable that this saint, as well as St Thomas of India, in whose honour, as we have seen, a pair of gloves was presented at St Margaret's, was a prominent figure in our Whitsuntide spectacle, no less than in the Corpus Christi procession at Coventry

On the same day, and probably in conjunction with the more magnificent one from St Mary's, a somewhat similar procession took place from St Martin's

to St Margaret's Church, in which the vicars, priests, and clerks are recorded to have taken a prominent part, and in which the image of St Martin was carried, attended by twelve persons, with banners, representing the twelve apostles, but there was no music, nor any canopy over St Martin

This procession probably joined itself to that from St Mary's on its progress along the High (now High-Cross) Street, and the actors in it were also feasted at the expense of the parish, as at St Mary's

Mr Caite is of opinion that similar processions took place on Whit Monday from all the other churches of the town, although the record of them is lost

Among other entries in the Churchwardens' Accounts of St Martin's, in reference to the procession, are the following ¹

“ 1544	Paid to the viker, prests, and clarks for the preseshon at Sent m̄gettis on Whissun mōday	xij ^d
P ^d	to Danyell for mēding the vestmēts	ij ^s viij ^d
P ^d	for a yard of ḡene silk and x skeynes thred	viij ^d
P ^d	for a q̄t. of a ^h of ynkle ²	iiij ^d ob
P ^d	for the charges of the Presseshon on Whissunmonday, as doth a peyre in a bill	x ^s ij ^d
P ^d	for brayd and ale on Whissun mōday	xij ^d

¹ These extracts are transcribed from the original MS volume, of 773 pages, containing the parish accounts from 1544 to 1646, which, after being for many years in private hands, has recently been obtained (with the intention of restoring it to the church,) by my friend Mr Thomas North, to whom I am indebted for the loan of it

² *Inkle*, an inferior kind of tape — *Halliwell*

P^d for mēding styn things belonging
to the p̄eſheshon whiche was nede-
full to be done xij^d

P^d to the Smēars at sent Margarets for
the offring viij^d

1545 Itm receyvd at sent m̄grets church
at Whitsontide ij^s ij^d“

Among several entries in the following year we
have

“Itm p^d fysrte for paper pyñes &
poynts at Whitsontyde iiij^d

Itm for bred & ale, kakes in the churche xiiij^d

Itm to y^e priests of o^r churche of the
offeringe vj^d“

And in 1546

“Itm p^d for bred, alle, glouys¹ & all such
thyngs as belongyd to the p̄osses-
syon, wth money & all things cleyd xvij^s“

After 1548, the procession appears to have been
discontinued until the year 1555—the first of Queen
Mary's reign—when, together with the Mass, and
other ceremonies, it was revived, and the following
payments were made

“Itm p^d to John Barbo^r for the bannels iiiij^s

Itm p^d for the offerynge that lackyd at
sent m̄gyt at Whytsondaye & drynk
ther for the v^rgyns xij^d“

In 1558, the sum of fourteen pence was paid “for
the beyryng of the crosse & banners,” and fifteen
pence spent “for ij gallons of ale & iiiij^d in kakes at
seynt m̄getts,” and we may well imagine that the
revivers of this old ceremony would be ready to cry

¹ Gloves

out to the Reformers, in the words of Sir Toby Belch—
“Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there
shall be no more cakes and ale?”¹

After its revival under Queen Mary, the procession was probably shorn of much of its pristine splendour and popularity, for the annual charges for it were greatly reduced, whilst it is recorded, that all the rich vestments, church ornaments, the canopy, &c., had been sold in the previous reign, and after 1559 it seems to have been finally discontinued, the payments in that year being the last that were made for it, although there is a final entry in 1560 of

“ P^d for the offering at Saint m^ggetts ij^s ij^d”

Although, as before remarked, it seems doubtful whether any performance of a dramatic character took place during the progress of these Whitsuntide processions through the town, the Churchwardens' Accounts of those parishes afford positive evidence that plays were performed both in St Mary's and St Martin's churches, and, in all probability, such representations took place on many occasions when no expense was entailed by them on the parochial funds, and, consequently, no entry on the subject made in the accounts.

Thus at St Mary's in the year 1491 there was

“Paid to the Players on New-year’s day at Even
in the Church vj^d”

and in 1499,

"Paid for a play in the church, in Do-

minicâ infra octa⁸ Epiph' 115

showing that in Leicester, as elsewhere, miracle plays were represented in the churches on Sunday,

¹ "Twelfth Night," act ii sc. 3

whilst at St Martin's in the year 1560, (when, as we have seen, the Whitsuntide procession was discontinued,) there was

"P^d to the plears for ther paynes
and, apparently to entertain them, vij^d"

"P^d for 11¹ gallons of alle & 11¹ in kakes x 1¹"

Among the extracts from the Borough Accounts, under the year 1551, is an entry showing that the "Eight-and-Forty," greatly addicted as the members of the Corporation were to the pleasures of the table, (*mirabile dictu!*) actually absented themselves from the enjoyment of a venison feast, which had been prepared for them, "*because of the play, that was in the church,*" doubtless St Martin's¹ Even so late as

¹ A writer in the "North British Review," for February, 1863 (p 194), states that even in Scotland, "long after the Reformation, such plays were performed, *and sometimes still upon a Sunday*, for the people saw no harm in this, and petitioned the National Assembly that it might be allowed. But the Reformed Ministers had now begun to entertain stricter notions of the day of rest, and forbade on that day the performance of Plays." He adds, that after the Reformation, "the people (above all) remained attached to the amusements which the ancient Church had fostered." Every one will recollect the graphic description given by Scott of Adam Woodcock's personation of the 'Abbot of Unreason,' and the freaks of the other *dramatis personae*

Many curious particulars illustrative of the performance of plays in churches, consisting of Extracts from the Accounts of St Margaret's Church, Southwark, will be found in the "Shakespeare Society's Papers," vol iii, contributed by Mr J Payne Collier, who also communicates a note from Sir Henry Ellis stating (from Harl MS 6954, p 152) "that on June 7th, 1483, the citizens of Lincoln had leave to perform a Play in the Nave of the Cathedral, as had been their custom upon the Assumption of the Virgin Mary 'Ludum, sive Sermonium, de Assumptione, sive Coronatione beatæ Mariae—prout consuetudinaria fuerat in Navide Ecclesie'"

1602, long after the Reformation had been firmly established, this practice of the Roman Church had not entirely ceased, for in that year the churchwardens of the neighbouring village of Syston, as we learn from the parish register,

“Paid to Lord Morden’s players because they should not play in the church xi^d”

showing that the players claimed a sort of prescriptive right, even at that time, to use the house of God for their performances, although Bonner, Bishop of London, sixty years before, issued a proclamation to the clergy of his diocese, prohibiting all manner of common plays, games, or interludes to be played, set forth, or declared, within their churches or chapels

We also find several references in the parish accounts to the dresses, &c, of the players, some of which are curious for instance, the following in connection with St Mary’s Church

1504	Paid for mending the garment of Jesus, and the cross painting	0	1	3
	Paid for a pound of hemp to mend the angels’ heads	0	0	4
	Paid for linen cloth for the angels’ heads, and Jesus’ hooſe, ¹ making in all	0	0	9
	Charcoal and a cord for the vail	0	0	2

¹ Among other entries quoted in Sharp’s “Coventry Mysteries” (p. 221) from the book of the Fullers and Dyers’ Company, at Newcastle upon Tyne, connected with the Miracle Plays formerly represented by the trading companies of that town, are the following, in the year 1561, headed “The chargys of the play this yere —

Item for ij yerds and a d lyn cloth for Gods coot	ij ^s	ij ^d ob
Item þ ^c hoyſe and cot [hose and coat] makyngh		vj ^d
Item for a payr of gloves		nj ^d

The last entry, in all probability, relates to the dramatic ceremonies observed in the churches on Palm Sunday (to be hereafter mentioned) when, as it is said, in "Dives and Pauper" (1496), "On Palme Sondaye, at procession, the priest drawith up the veyle before the rode, and falleth down to the ground with all the people, and saith thrice *Ave Rex Noster*, Hayle be thou our King."

It is not improbable that the following entry in the next year's account may refer, in part, to "stage properties" used in the performance of the plays, as well as to the church ornaments, &c

"Memorandum, quod omnia jocalia et ornamenta data ecclesiæ visa fuerunt à parochianis in festo Sancti Andree Apostoli in magno choro post nonam ei, &c
1507 Paid for a pound of hemp for the heads of the

angels 0 0 3

Paid for painting the wings and scaff (?) 0 0 8
&c

Paid for a day's work in mending all the
red copes of silk 0 0 4

Item, a day's woik mending the red suit
of velvet 0 0 4

1509 Paid for our Lady's crown 0 1 6

1521 Paid for washing the lawn bands
for the Saints in the church 0 0 2"

Probably for a representation of the Resurrection of Christ, to which also the previous entries respecting the angels, &c, may refer, and, lastly, in 1525 there was
"Paid for the dressing of our Lady 0 2 0"

Whilst at St Martin's, in the account for the year 1546-7 (which is misplaced in the volume, and paged 125-128), we have the following curious entry hitherto unpublished

This immediately precedes the payment for the expenses of the Whitsuntide procession, before quoted, and we must either conclude that Herod figured in that spectacle,¹ or, as is more probable, the entry is connected with a representation of the miracle play of "The Slaughter of the Innocents," the nineteenth in the series of the "Coventry Mysteries," which was a very popular subject

In the "Widkirk," or, as they are now more commonly called, the "Townley Mysteries," the play is entitled "Magnus Herodes," as being the piece in which he rants and swaggers the most—traits, indeed, by which the character continued to be so well known down to the time of Shakespeare as to have given rise to his saying in *Hamlet*,² of "out-Heroding Herod," and in the "Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors,"³ there is the following stage direction—"Here Erode ragis in þe pagond & in the stiete also," and in the earlier part of the same play⁴ Herod boasts of the wonderful deeds he has performed with his "bright sword," in the following terms

"Magog & madioke bothe þe did I confownde,
And w^t this bryght bronde there bonis I bæk on sundr,

¹ Herod rode in the Corpus Christi procession at Coventry, as we learn from Mr Sharp's work, in which (p 28) *inter alia*, are the following extracts from the city accounts

" 1477 It' to a peyntei for peyntyng the ffauchon (sword) & herods face

1489 It 'payd ffor Aroddes garment peynnttyng þt he
went a pssassyon in

2 Act III sc 2

³ Sharp's "Coventry Mysteries," p. 107

⁴ Ibid p 98

Thatt all the wyde woldē on those rappis¹ did wond'r
I am the cause of this grett lyght and thund'r,
Ytt ys th̄ough my fūc þt the soche noyse dothe make,
My f̄yrefull contenance þt clowd̄s so doth incūbui,
þt oftym² for diede þt of the verie yerth doth quake
Loke when I u^t males this byght brond̄ doth shake
All the whole woldē from the north to þt sowthe,
I ma them dystroie w^t won worde of my mowthe," &c &c

In 1561, there was "R^d for serthen stufe lent to the players of Fosson vj^d," showing that there was a theatrical wardrobe attached to the church, whilst in the year 1556, during the reign of Queen Mary, a highly interesting entry occurs. At this period the performance of miracle plays and mysteries had been revived under the royal authority, in order to inculcate and enforce the tenets of the Romish Church, whilst the representation of secular plays was strictly prohibited, as frequently containing "naughty and seditious matters to the slander of Christ's true and Catholic Religion"² The entry is as follows —

¹ Raps, b'ows

² Collier's "Annals of the Stage," 1, p 159. The use to which these performances were applied, about the period of the Reformation, by the priests of the Roman Communion, is well shown in the following interesting document printed in Halliwell's "Letters of the Kings of England," (1, p 345), from Rawlinson's MSS in the Bodleian. It is a letter addressed by Henry VIII to some Justice of the Peace —

"Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. And whereas we understand by certain report the late evil and seditious rising in our ancient city of York, at the acting of a religious interlude of St Thomas the Apostle, made in the said city on the 23rd of August now last past, and whereas we have been credibly informed that the said rising was owing to the seditious conduct of certain papists who took a part in preparing for the said interlude, we will and require you that from henceforward

“P^d to the ij Shepperds at Whytsontyde vj^d” and it doubtless refers to the performance in the church at this festival of the play of “The Adoration of the Shepherds,” which is to be found in the “Coventry Mysteries,” and also, as a more extended and entirely different composition, in the series of plays performed at Chester, this being the seventh in the list, and appropriated to “the Paynters and the Glasiors” Company. It is also to be found, divided into two plays, in the “Townley Mysteries”

The Chester play is interesting, because, as Mr Wright says,¹ “it contains an attempt at an elaborate picture of old country life,” one incident in the piece being a wrestling bout between each of the Shepherds and their man Trowle, before the appearance of the Star and of the Angel who sings *Gloria in excelsis*. The three Shepherds, “who are Cheshire or Lancashire men by birth and habits,” accompanied by their “ladde” or “knave” Trowle, then follow the Star to Bethlehem, and after addressing Joseph and Mary, present their offerings to the infant Saviour in the following words —

“*Primus Pastor*” says,—

“Heale, king of heaven so hie!

* * * * *

Loe, I bringe thee a bell
I prae thee save me from hell,

ye do your utmost to prevent and hinder any such commotion in future, and for this ye have my warrant for apprehending and putting in prison any papists who shall, in performing interludes which are founded on any portions of the Old or New Testament, say or make use of any language which may tend to excite those who are beholding the same to any breach of the peace”

¹ “Chester Plays,” 1, p 251, note

So that I maye with thee dwell,
And serve thee for aye

Secundus Pastor

* * * * *

Loe, sonne, I bring thee a flaggette,
Theirby heinges a sponne,
To eate thy pottage with at nonne,
As I myselfe full ofte tymes have done,
With harte I prae thee to take

Tercius Pastor

* * * * *

Heale the, granter of happe,
For in yearth nowe thou dwelleste
Loe, sonne, I bring thee a cape,
For I have nothinge elles,
This gueifte, sonne, I bringe thee is but small,
And though I come hindmoste of all,
Whan thou shalt them to thy blesse call,
Good Lorde, yet thinke on me "

Trowle (who appears to partake somewhat of the character of the "Vice" in the Moralities, and of the low comedian of the later secular plays) says—

" My dere, with duty unto thee I me dresse,
My state and fellowshippe that I doe not lose,
For to save me from all yle sicknes,
I offer unto thee a payer of my wife's oulde hose"

* * * * *

Such is a specimen of the ancient Mysteries which three or four centuries ago the ministers of religion thought not unworthy of representation in the house of God, and to which our forefathers listened without any sense of impropriety or profanity. We may indeed truly say, "*Tempor a mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis!*"

One of the two plays of the Shepherds in the "Townley Mysteries" is even more unfit for representation in such a place. The plot is a sheep-stealing, and the play is characterized by Mr Payne Collier¹ as "the most singular piece in the whole collection, it is not a religious play, but literally a farce, by no means destitute of humour, intended to diversify the performances." It is possible, however, that the play performed at St Martin's more nearly approximated to that in the "Coventry Mysteries," which was of a more simple and religious character. It will be seen hereafter that "the Playeis of Coventry," in the Shakespearian age, frequently visited this town, and although Mr Wright, in his Introduction to the Chester Plays,² is of opinion that the Mysteries and Miracle Plays "appear in most cases to have been written for local use, and not to have been carried abroad from the neighbourhood in which they were usually acted," it is not impossible that the "Adoration of the Shepherds" may even have been performed here by the Coventry actors of that day, for, as is evident from the conclusion of the Prologue to the Collection of the "Coventry Mysteries," edited by Mr Halliwell, their representation was not confined exclusively to that city.

"A Sunday next, yf that we may,
At vj of the belle we gynne oure play
In N towne, wherfore we pray,
That God now be ȝoure spedē."³

¹ "History of Dramatic Poetry" ii, p. 180

² Page xiii

³ Page 18. Mr Collier, in his "History of Dramatic Poetry," vol. ii, p. 156, observes, that "the letter N is placed for the *nomen* of the town, which was to be filled up, as occasion required, by the person making the proclamation." This pas-

There are three other entries in the accounts of St Martin's which relate to the dramatic displays in the churches on particular festivals

In 1544 we have—

“P^d on Palme Sunday to the proffit (Prophet),
and for ale at the reding the passhon ij^d,

In the following year the entry thus appears—

“Item p^d to y^e pphete & for ale on Palme
Sonday ij^d”

And, once more, in the account for 1546-7, we have—

“Item p^d to y^e pfect of Palme Sonday & that he
dranke iiiij^d”

These relate to the ceremonies formerly practised in the churches on Palm, or, as it was sometimes called, Passion Sunday

A full description will be found in Brand's “Popular Antiquities” and Hone's “Year Book,” of the procession on that day, of the representative of Christ seated on an ass, and attended by the priests and people, strewing willow or palm branches in the way, and by which, as Dr Fulke writes, the Roman Church turned “the holy mystery of Christ's riding to Jerusalem to a May game and pageant play”¹

The custom of reading or singing “the Passion” is not so well known as the procession of the ass, but we find allusions to it, illustrative of the above, in ancient parochial accounts in various parts of the kingdom. Thus, among the extracts from the churchwardens' accounts of St Mary-at-Hill, in the City of

sage also illustrates what has been before mentioned, as to the performance of plays on Sundays, and further, the early hour in the morning when the representations took place

¹ Fulke, *in loc. Mat.*

London, quoted in Nichols's "Illustrations of the Manners and Expenses of Ancient Times," is the following entry, in the year 1531 —

"Paid for the hire of the rayment for the *Prophets*
12^d, and of Clothes of Aras 1^s 4^d, for Palme
Sunday"

And in Coates' "History of Reading"¹ we have several curious items illustrative of the custom, extracted from the Churchwardens' Accounts of St Lawrence Parish, *e.g.*,

"1505 It payed to the Clerk, for syngynge of
the Passion on Palme Sunday, in ale J^d

1509 It paid for a qrt of bastard, for the
singers of the Passhyon on Palme Sondaye m^j^d"

And, "1541 Payd to Loreman for *playing the*
Pphett (Prophet) on Palme Sonday m^j^d"

An inventory of "Garments for Playeis" at the Court Revels, "A° vii Henr VIII" contains the following entries — "A long garment of cloth of golde and tynsell, for the Prophete upon Palme Sonday" "Itm a capp of grene tynsell to the same"²

We have before had occasion to refer to Mr J Payne Collier's "Extracts from the Accounts of the ancient Parish of St Margaret, Southwark, now united to that of St Mary Overy"³ He says, "In 1456, we find that occasional professional singers were hired, and they seem to have supplied the absence of players thus we have [*inter alia*] —
• Payed for brede and wyne for the syngers on
Palmesonday ix^d, "

¹ Page 216

² Printed in Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 80

³ Papers of the Shakespeare Society, vol iii, p 45

Among the extracts from the old books of St Andrew Hubbard's parish, made by Dr Griffith, we find the following curious entries —

“ 1526-7	The <i>here</i> ¹ of the <i>Angel</i> on Palme	
	Sunday	8 ^d
	Clothes at the Tow'r on Palme Sunday	6 ^d
1535-7	For Brede, Wyn, and Oyle on Palm	
	Sunday	6 ^d
	A Preest and Chylde that playde a Mes-	
	senger	8 ^d
1538-40	Rec ^d in the church of the Players	1 ^s
	P ^d for syngyn bread	2 ^d
	For the <i>Anguel</i>	4 ^d ”

And at Kingston upon Thames there was paid —

“ 1 Hen VIII	For ale, upon Palm Sunday on	
	syngyn of the Passion	0 ^l 0 ^s 1 ^d ”

In a curious tract quoted by Bland,² entitled “A Dialogue or familiar Talke, betwene two Neighbours, concernynge the Chyefest Ceremonyes that were, by the mighti Power of God's most holie pure Worde, suppressed in Englande, and nowe for our unworthyness set up agayne by the Bishoppes, the Impes of Antichrist, &c , 1554 ” (that is, the first of Queen Mary), we have some account of the ceremony of

¹ Hair See the extracts from the Accounts of St Mary's, Leicester, p 17 *ante*, of payments for “*hemp for the heads of the angels*” Among some extracts from an old Essex parish account-book, in the possession of the Ven Archdeacon Mildmay, printed in the “Freemasons' Magazine,” for September 14th, 1861, we have in 1562, in a list of players' dresses, taken from the “inventory of the goods remaining in the church”— 3 “sloppes for devils,” 23 “bredes” or beards, and 21 “hares,” and again in the same year there was “Paid unto Andrew, for heres and beards borrowed of him, 4s”

² “Popular Antiquities,” ed 1841, vol 1, p 74

“Singing the Passion”—“The old Church kept a memorye the Sunday before Ester, how Christes glory was openly received and acknowledged among the Jewes and the Gospel declaring the same was appointed to be read on that day. But now our blind leaders of the blind take away the knowledge of this, with their Latine processioning, so that among x thousande, scaise one knew what this ment. But, lorde, what ape’s-playe made they of it in great cathedral churches and abbies! One comes forth in his albe and his long stole. This solempne syre played Christes part, a God’s name. Then another compayne of Singers, chyldren and al, song, in pricksong, the Jewe’s part—and the deacon read the middel text. The prest at the Alter al this while, because it was tediouse to be unoccupyed, made crosses of Palme to set upon your doors, and to beare in your purses to chace away the Divel.”

In Doblado’s “Letters from Spain,” we have a long and interesting description of the ceremonies observed on Palm Sunday in Roman Catholic countries in modern times. The part relating to the singing of the Passion is as follows—

“In the long church-service for this day, the organ is silent, the voices being supported by hautboys and bassoons. The four accounts of our Saviour’s Passion, appointed as Gospels for this day, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, are dramatized in the following manner. A moveable platform, with a desk, is placed between the pulpits in the *Passion-days*, and three priests or deacons, in *albes*—the white vestment over which the dalmatic is worn by the latter, and the casulla by the former—appear on these

elevated posts at the time when the Gospel should be said. These officiating ministers are chosen amongst the singers in holy orders, one a bass, another a tenor, and the third a counter-tenor. The tenor chaunts the narrative without changing from the key-note, and makes a pause whenever he comes to the words of the interlocutors mentioned by the Evangelist. In those passages the words of our Saviour are sung by the bass in a solemn strain. The counter-tenor, in a more florid style, personates the inferior characters, such as Peter, the Maid, and Pontius Pilate. The cries of the priests and the multitude are represented by the band of musicians within the choir."

In Barnaby Googe's translation of Naogeorgus's "Popish Kingdome," further illustrations of the ancient ceremonies observed on this day will be found.

To return, however, to our local records. The earliest, and by far the fullest and most suggestive reference to the early Mysteries which we possess, is contained in the, unfortunately, unique entry, appearing as a memorandum on a page of the hall-book of the corporation in the year 1478. This entry, stripped of its antique dross, states that at a Common Hall held on the 26th of March, in the seventeenth year of King Edward the Fourth's reign, the players who played the *Passion Play* the year before, brought in a bill respecting certain duties of money, and [enquiring] whether the "Passion" should be put to crafts (or trading companies) to be bound, or nay. And, at the same time, the players gave to the *Pageants* all the money which they had gained in performing the play up to that time, and all their taiments and all other manner of "stuff" (or, in

theatrical parlance, wardrobe and “properties”) that they then had. It concludes by stating that, by the advice of all the commons, or townsmen, twenty-one persons, whose names are appended, were chosen at the Common Hall to have the guiding and rule of the said play—two of the body being designated “bedalls.” Although we certainly do not learn very much *directly* from this document, beyond the mere fact, however interesting in itself, of the performance in this town of a Mystery on the Passion of our Saviour, in the year 1477, we are enabled inferentially to deduce information from it upon several points. Of the play itself, and the objects of such performances, we find some explanation in a MS. in the Harleian Library on the Chester Mysteries. It sets forth that, “in ould tyme, not only for the augmentation and inciees of the Holy and Catholick faith, and to exhort the minds of common people to good Devotion and holsome Doctrine, but also for the Commonwealth and Prosperity of the city, a Play and Declaration of diuers Stories of the Bible, beginning with the Creation and Fall of Lucifer, and ending with the general Judgement of the World [was] to be declared and played in the Whitsonne Week” by the several trading companies of the city. The Pope gave a thousand days’ pardon, and the Bishop of Chester forty days’ pardon, to every person resorting in peaceable manner to hear and see the said plays, which were stated to have been “instituted to the honour of God,” and are supposed to have been first performed in the year 1328. The MS. contains the plays thus performed, which were twenty-four in number, and the sixteenth on the list is “The

Fletchers', Bowyers', Cowpers', and Stringers' Play
—*De Passione Christi*”

These Mysteries, which were represented for the last time in 1574, have been printed for the Shakespeare Society (2 vols 8vo, 1843-7), under the editorship of Mr Thomas Wright. The play itself appears to have been a most favourite one, if we may judge from the frequency with which it is recorded to have been performed on various occasions, in different parts of the kingdom. Thus, in Devon's “Issues of the Exchequer,” &c,¹ we have the following curious entry, under date 14th Richard II —

“ 11th July To the clerks of the parish churches, and to divers other clerks in the City of London In money paid to them in discharge of 10^l, which the Lord the King commanded to be paid them as his gift, on account of the play of *The Passion of our Lord and the Creation of the World*, by them performed at Skynnerwell, after the feast of Saint Bartholomew last past By writ of privy seal, amongst the mandates of this term 10^l ”

We also learn from “Machyn's Diary,” that on the 6th June, 1557, a stage-play of the Passion of Christ began at the Grey Friars, London, where, also, the same play had been performed in the preceding year. Malone supposes that the last Mystery represented in England was also one on Christ's Passion, in the reign of James the First. It was also a subject no less popular on the Continent, and even in the present age miracle plays do not appear to be entirely extinct in France, for at Christmas 1852, the performance of one, representing the

¹ 8vo, 1837, p 244

Nativity and *Passion* of the Saviour, was forbidden by the Prefect of the Department of the Vaucluse, whilst at Ober Ammergau, in Bavaria, they are still periodically performed every ten years, in consequence, it is said, of a vow made by the inhabitants of the place in 1663, on their deliverance from a plague which then prevailed in the district. This *Passions Spiel* represents the entire history of Christ, from his entry into Jerusalem to his *Passion* and Crucifixion, and his appearance to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection. Its decennial representation is carried out on a grand scale, and attracts numerous spectators, many of them from great distances.¹

It would appear, that in performing the *Passion Play*, no less than in that on "The Creation of the World," already mentioned, the Scripture narrative was closely adhered to on the stage, so much so as to be not unfrequently attended with danger to the actors, for a copy in vellum of "Le Mystere de la Passion Jesus Christ," printed at Paris in 1490, and preserved in the Imperial Library of that city,² contains a MS note, in French, purporting to be an extract from an old chronicle, entitled "Histoire de Metz véritable," which relates that in the year 1437 the play *De la Passion NS* was represented in the plain of Veximiel, when the curé of St Victor of Metz, who represented Christ, "was nigh dead upon the cross if he had not been assisted," and that another priest, who was chaplain of Metrange, and who played *Judas*, "was nearly dead while hanging,

¹ A very elaborate account of it will be found in "Macmillan's Magazine" for October, 1860, attributed to Dr Stanley
- No 4350

for his heart failed him, wherefore he was quickly unhung and carried off”¹

But to resume The question, “whether the *Passion* should be put to crafts to be bounden or nay,” seems to indicate that here, as at Chester, and indeed most of the ancient corporate towns, these players were selected from particular guilds or trading companies, several of which, it is on record, were established here, but unfortunately, unlike those at Coventry, York, Newcastle, and Shrewsbury, none of their account books have come down to us²

It is evident that in 1478 the *Passion Play* was not of recent introduction, but fully established, like “the *Pageants*,” to which the money and dresses of these players were presented. It is, however, uncertain what were these “*Pageants*”—whether the Whitsuntide spectacles from the churches, already described, or, as is more probable, some separate and independent performance by the trading companies of the town, similar to the “*Pageant of the Company of Shearmen and Taylors in Coventry*,”³ for the term *pageant*, which was, in the first instance, applied to the vehicle of exhibition, or stage, was afterwards applied to the exhibition itself⁴ The “*Pageants*,” which were usually performed in the highways of our mediæval towns, assimilated, in some degree, to the *Miracle Plays*, but were of a

¹ Hone’s “*Ancient Mysteries*,” pp 172, 173

² The York *Corpus Christi* play comprised no less than fifty-seven *Pageants*, which were represented by as many trading companies of the city, a list of which is given in Davies’ “*York Records*,” p 233

³ Printed in Sharpe’s “*Coventry Mysteries*”

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 2

more mixed character, being partly drawn from profane history indeed Warton¹ is of opinion that the Pageants dictated ideas of a regular drama much sooner than the Mysteries, from this very circumstance, that on civil occasions they derived great part of their decorations and actors from historical fact, and, consequently, first made profane characters the subject of public exhibition. The same writer thinks that it was not until about the reign of Henry VI (or a few years before the date of this record) that the performers in Pageants began to recite, and Strutt remarks that Pageants, though commonly exhibited in the great cities and towns of England on solemn and joyful occasions, were more frequent in London, and mentions, besides other reasons, that there were ceremonials incident at stated periods, such as the setting of the Midsummer Watch, and the Lord Mayor's Show² We gather from our local records that here, also, the custom prevailed of "setting the Watch," when these "ancient and most quiet" guardians of the night duly received their charge, and were thus prepared, like Dogberry and his fellows, "to comprehend all vagrom men,"³ but we know not the nature of the display on those occasions Among other Pageants exhibited at

¹ "History of English Poetry," vol. II, p. 202

² "Sports and Pastimes" (Hone's ed.), p. xxxix

³ "Much Ado about Nothing," act III, sc 3 In the Shakespeare Society's Papers (vol. 1, p. 1) is an original letter from Lord Burghley to Secretary Walsingham, dated 10th August, 1586, which gives a curious account of the proceedings of the Dogberries of that day for the arrest of suspected persons, and shows how much to the life our great dramatist drew the characters he introduced

Coventry on the occurrence of royal visits to that city, was one of St George, and it is not improbable that the "Riding of the George," at Leicester (to be hereafter described), was one of the pageants to which the players of the Passion Play presented their money.

As illustrating the mode of exhibition of the pageants, Mr Sharp¹ quotes the following minute description from a MS of Archdeacon Rogers, who died in 1595, and saw the Whitsun plays performed at Chester in the preceding year.

"The manner of which playes was thus they weare divided into 24 pagiantes according to the cōpanyes of the Cittie & every compayne brought forthe their pagiant w^{ch} was the cariage or place w^{ch} the played in. And thei first beganne at the Abbaye gates, & when the firste pagianta was played at the Abbaye gates then it was wheled from thense to Pentice, at the hyghe Crosse, before the Maior, & before that was donne the seconde came,—and the first went into the Watergate Streete, & from thense unto the Bridge Streete, & so one after an other 'till all the pagiantes weare played. these pagiantes or carige was a highe place made like a howse with 2 rowmes, beinge open on the tope—the lower rowme theire appariellid & dressed themselves, & the higher rowme theire played, & theire stooide upon vi wheeles, & when the had donne with one carriage in one place theire wheled the same from one streete to another."

In reference to this transcript Mr Davies² says, "it is curious to observe how closely this description of

¹ "Coventry M̄steries," p 18

² "York Records," p 240

the means used for the entertainment of the unenlightened populace of a barbarous age resembles that of the pageants exhibited for the gratification of the polished citizens of imperial Rome" He then proceeds to show the similarity between the *pegma* or pageant used in the Roman amphitheatre and these vehicles

This contemporary description affords us, as will be seen, a very clear idea of the manner in which the series of plays were publicly exhibited, being of course applicable to other places, no less than to Chester, and had the account books of our old trading companies been preserved, it is scarcely to be doubted that a similar series would be found to have been represented in this town, although the fact can now only be asserted on the collateral evidence contained in this "Memorandum"

Whether the one-and-twenty individuals selected at the Common Hall were the actual performers who were to represent the play, or were to constitute a committee of management over them, seems uncertain, probably the latter was the case, but, either way, their appointment is indicative of the social importance attached to the subject, for those so chosen consisted of many of the leading men in the community—several, like the Wigstons, were wealthy—more than one rose to represent the borough in Parliament—still more served the office of mayor—others again were justices of the peace—and nearly the whole were members of the Corporation

It will be seen, that two of these individuals are designated "bedalls," who, it is not improbable, collected the money from the spectators and kept order during the performance

Mr Halliwell (Archaic Dictionary) gives "Bedell"—a servitor, perhaps bailiff," and we find the following quoted by Mr Sharp from the account for the year 1490, under the head—"Payd to the players for Corpus Xpiste daye," showing that the "Bedull" occupied an inferior position, from the small amount of remuneration paid for his services

"Imprimis to God	ij ^s
Itm to Cayphas	iiij ^s iiij ^d
Itm to Heroude	iiij ^s iiij ^d
Itm to Pilatt is wyffe	ij ^s
Itm to the <i>Bedull</i>	iiij ^d , ¹

And among the list of "garments" we have

"Itm the devyls hede
Itm a Gowne for the bedull
Itm a hode for the bedull
Itm a Fawchon for heroude"²

Ten years earlier we have

"Expens' for a jaket for þe bydull,"
and Mr Sharp observes,³ that this character in the Coventry plays was indifferently named the Beadle or Porter

From this "Memorandum" in the Hall book of the Corporation we pass to another entry under the year 1495, which, although from its rude orthography and its being so obscurely worded there is a difficulty in deciding upon its precise meaning, we may with great probability assume to have reference to the plays or pageants—the "goods" mentioned as "wood, timber, and other playing *germands* (or garments) deposited

¹ "Coventry Mysteries," p 16

² Ibid p 17 The last entry further illustrates the extract from the Accounts of St Martin's respecting Herod's sword

³ Ibid p 30

in a store-house in the Saturday-Market," being, most likely, the theatrical wardrobe, and the "pageant" or stage on which the plays were performed in the streets of the town, as we find that in most of our old cities there was a "Pageant house" in which that vehicle was deposited, when not in use

In this as well as in the former instance, overseers were appointed by the Corporation—the number, however, being limited on this occasion to six, the first of whom, Richard Gillott, became Mayor of the town in the following year

The meeting here recorded, was held in the Hall of Corpus Christi Guild, which occupied the site, if it did not, as is probable, constitute the eastern portion of the present town—or, more properly, Guild Hall

This brings us to a subject full of interest, and which, at present, has been only very imperfectly investigated, namely, the existence in Leicester, prior to the Reformation, of several religious guilds or fraternities. These consisted of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, held in the south aisle, or "Trinity Chou," in St Mary's Church, St Margaret's and St John's Guilds, held respectively in the church of the same name, and St George's and Corpus Christi Guilds, held in separate chapels in St Martin's Church

Of these the chief in wealth and importance, as well as antiquity, was that of Corpus Christi, which was founded in the year 1349-50, and a few of the rentals and rolls of account, of a later date, belonging to it, still remain amongst the Corporation records, owing to most of the possessions of the town guilds having passed into the hands of that body after the Reformation

With the history of these religious fraternities,

however, we have now only to do so far as they are connected with the exhibition of spectacles and pageants

Public processions by the members of these guilds (which partook, more or less, of the character of the benefit and burial clubs of the present day,) took place on their respective festival days in honour of the Trinity, of the Corpus Christi or "Host," or of the particular saint to whom they were dedicated—that of Corpus Christi being, with one exception, the most splendid

Mr James Thompson, in his "History of Leicester,"¹ has described the annual procession of this Guild, but all the religious processions partook so much of the same general character, that the account already given of the Whitsuntide processions in this town, coupled with that of the Corpus Christi Guild at Coventry, renders it quite superfluous to dilate further upon them

But, as before remarked, there was one of the religious guilds which was an exception to the rest this was the one dedicated to the Patron Saint of England, St George, whose festival is on the 23rd of April. The fraternity thus combined to do honour to this saint, although comparatively poor, was the only guild, in addition to that of Corpus Christi, which possessed its own Hall. This building stood near the eastern end of St Martin's churchyard, probably occupying the site of the Queen's Head public-house and the adjoining residence of the Misses Nedham. We find the following entry respecting it in the

¹ Page 149

Chamberlain's Account for the year 1605-6 among the receipts of fee farm rents

“ In Holye Roode Lane or St Martyns Church-gate

Itm̄ recē of John fflampson for a howsse called
St Georges Hall in his occupation in fee farm
 p Annum vjs viij^d”

The guild chapel of St George was at the west end of the broad south aisle of St Martin's Church, and over its altar was placed a life-size figure of the saint armed “ in complete steel,” and mounted on a richly caparisoned steed, whilst the chapel was supplied with the usual chantry vessels—a chalice, censer, lamp, candlestick, &c, there was also a painted cloth, and a bier-cloth, used at the public funerals of the brethren of the guild¹ Many of these were leading members of the corporation of the town—indeed, from some cause, not very clear in its origin, the guild appears to have been closely connected with the municipal authorities—by whom, as will be seen hereafter, several regulations were made and penalties imposed for the neglect of the annual ceremony of “Riding the George,” and the “Eight-and-Forty” also contributed individually towards the expenses attendant upon this great annual festival

As might be expected, from the fact of St George being the tutelar saint of the kingdom, he was held in great veneration in this country, a feeling which was doubtless enhanced in the popular mind by the well known but fabulous legend of his having slain a “dreadful dragon, fierce, and fell,” and thus, by his prowess, saved the daughter of the king of Egypt,

¹ Churchwardens' Accounts of St Martin's, *passim*

whom the insatiate monster would otherwise have devoured—a legend which is believed symbolically to typify that *Christ's Soldier* and *Knight* should always be ready manfully to combat against the *Dragon*, one of the Scripture emblems of the Devil¹. However this may be, in all pictorial and other representations, the saint is almost invariably attended by the dragon, and, generally, in the public religious processions prior to the Reformation, by a handsome female personating the fair *Princess Sabia*, whom he had rescued from the devouring beast and afterwards married, bringing her to his native city, where, as the old ballad informs us,

“They many years of joy did see,
And led then lives at Coventry”

Barnaby Googe, in “*The Popish Kingdome*,”² has given a translation of “*Naogeorgus*,” describing that,

“To every saint they also doe his office here assine,
And fourtene doe they count of whom thou mayst have
ayde divine,”

And, among the number, we are informed that,

“Thy office, *George*, is onely here the horseman to defende,
*Great kinges and noble men, with pompe, on thee doe still
attende,*”

showing the popularity and splendour of these spectacles in honour of the saint, indeed, we find that body armour was not unfrequently specially bequeathed by will to a church, to be worn by the *George*

¹ Brady's “*Clavis Calendaria*,” 3rd edit., vol 1, p 323
² Fol 98, 99

Thus, Dugdale¹ tells us that “John Arden, one of the esquires of the body to Henry the Seventh, in 1526, bequeathed his white harneis complete to the church of Aston (where his body was to be buried) *for a George to were it*, and to stand on his pewe, a place made for it, and he provided that if the said George was not made within a year after his decease, that his executors should sell it”

Such a “George” was provided at Reading, in the year 1536, the Churchwardens’ Accounts² containing several entries for the “Chraig’ of Saynt George,” among which are the following —

“First payd for ij caffes-skynes, and ij		
horse-skynnes	iiij ^s	vj ^d
Payd for makeyng the loft that Saynt		
George standeth upon		vj ^d
Payd for makeyng of Saynt Georges		
cote		viii ^d
Payd to John Paynter for his labour	xlv ^s	
Payd for roses, bells, gyrdle, sword,		
and dagger	iiij ^s	iiij ^d ”

In 1416, at Windsor, a performance took place before the Emperor Sigismund and Henry V on incidents of the legendary life of St George, which was divided into three parts, exhibiting—first, “the armyng of Seint George, and an Angel doyng on his spores [spurs],” secondly, “Seint George ridyng and fightyng with the dragon, with his spere in his hand,” and, thirdly, “a castel, and Seint George and the Kynges daughter ledyng the lambe in at the

¹ “History of Warwickshire,” p. 928

² Printed in Coates’ “History of Reading,” p. 221

castel gates ”¹ It seems uncertain whether this was a Miracle Play, or merely a splendid dumb show

At Basingborne, in Cambridgeshire, a play of “The Holy Martyr St George” was represented, in 1511, in a croft or field, at which “a mynstral and three waits of Cambridge” assisted, and on which occasion six sheep (which cost 1s 10d each) and three calves and half a lamb (costing 8s 2d) were provided, and roasted for the use of the players and the general spectators, whilst, among other expenses, there was paid,

“ For iv chickens for the Gentlemen 1v^d ”²

In a “ Memorandum” descriptive of the “ Receav-
yng Prynce Edwarde” (who was then three years
old) at Coventry, on the 28th of April, 1474, when
he came out of Wales (printed by Mr Sharp³ from
the City Leet Book), it is recorded that he was met
by the Mayor and Corporation “ clothed in Grene
and Blewe,” when various pageants, with speeches,
were represented, attended with “ mynstralcy of the
Wayts of the Cite ” Among the rest—

“ Upon the Condite in the Crosse Chepyng was
seint George armed and Kynges dought^r knelyng
afore hym w^t a lambe and the fader and the moder
beyng in a toure a boven beholdyng seint George
savyng their dought^r from the dragon And the
Condite rennyng wine in my placez and mynstralcy
of Organ pleyinge and seint George havyng this
speche under wryttyn ” And in the “ Memo-

¹ Cotton MS, Calig b 11, quoted in Collier’s “ Annals of the Stage,” vol 1, p 20

² Extracts from the Churchwardens’ Accounts, in the “ Anti-
quarian Repository,” vol 1, p 176

³ “ Coventry Mysteries,” p 152

randum" of the receiving of Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII, on the 17th of October, 1498, on his way to London, it is stated that at the gate was a Pageant of the "ix Worthys and Kyng Arthur, whilst 'at the turnyng into þe crosschepynge

was the Quene of fortune with dyfs other virgyns and the crosse in the croschepynge was garnysshed & wyne ther rennyng and angels sensyng & syngyng with Oigayns and other melody, &c And at þe Cundyt ther was seyt George kyllynge the dragon and seyt George had this speche folowynge " (which was very complimentary to the young prince)

And, approaching still more nearly to the ceremonies observed at Leicester, we find that the festival of St George was annually celebrated at Stratford-upon-Avon Mr Charles Knight, deriving his authorities from the guild rolls of that town, has given us the following account of the proceedings on the occasion in his "Biography of Shakspere"¹— "It is the twenty-third of April, and the birthday of William Shakspere is a general holiday at Stratford It is St George's day There is high feasting at Westminster or at Windsor At Stratford there is humbler pageantry Upon the walls of the Chapel of the Holy Cross there was a wondrous painting of a terrible dragon pierced through the neck with a spear, but he has snapped the weapon in two with his fearful talons, and a gallant knight in complete armour is uplifting his sword, whilst the bold horse which he bestrides rushes upon the monster with his pointed champfrein in the background is a crowned

² Pictorial edit, p 61

lady with a lamb, and on distant towers a king and queen watching the combat. This story of Saint George and the delivery of the princess Silene from the power of the dragon was, on the twenty-third of April, wont to be dramatized at Stratford. From the altar of Saint George was annually taken down an ancient suit of harness, which was duly scoured and repaired, and from some storehouse was produced the figure of a dragon, which had also all needful annual reparation. Upon the back of some sturdy labourer was the harness fitted, and another powerful man had to bear the dragon, into whose body he no doubt entered. Then, all the dignitaries of the town being duly assembled, did Saint George and the dragon march along, amidst the ringing of bells, and the firing of chambers, and the shout of the patriotic population of 'Saint George for England'." "Here," adds Mr Knight, "is the simplest of dramatic exhibitions, presented through a series of years to the observing eyes of a boy in whom the dramatic power of going out of himself to portray some incident, or character, or passion, with incomparable truth, was to be developed and matured in the growth of his poetical faculty. As he looked upon that rude representation of a familiar legend, he may first have conceived the capability of exhibiting to the eye a moving picture of events, and of informing it with life by appropriate dialogue."

Nor was the popularity of St George confined to England, he is also, as is well known, the patron saint of Russia, and the Portuguese also adopted him from the English, under the following circumstances. A flotilla, bearing English Crusaders to the Holy Land, put into the Tagus just at the time when the

insurgent Portuguese having expelled the Moors from the city of Lisbon, had cooped them up in the castle, and, high as it stands, were about to assault it. We, of course, quite as ready to fight Lusitanian Moors as Oriental Saracens, landed forthwith, took part in the assault, shouted, after our wont, "St George! St George!" and effectually aided in the capture of the castle.

The Portuguese heard our shouts, and drew the inference, not only that the English saint was a valuable aid in his proper line, as an advocate, but that he himself, St George, was actually in our midst, and, as our captain, had led us on to the assault. Hence, even to the present day, he continues to receive distinguished honour from the Portuguese. On their grand annual festival, *Corpo de Deos*, St George, a colossal image, richly attired, bearing a formidable lance, decked out with all the jewellery which the nobility of Lisbon can furnish for the occasion, and mounted on the largest and noblest charger that Lisbon can supply, passes through the main streets of the city, between rows of kneeling multitudes, escorted by priests, soldiers, and grandees. On one of these occasions the lance slipped from the hand of the figure, came down with a run, and wounded an unfortunate and kneeling spectator, who died from the accident. The Portuguese believe, not that this was an *accident*, but that St George himself did it to keep up the remembrance of his prowess.¹

These particulars will suffice to show the popu-

¹ From an article on Patron Saints, in "Notes and Queries," 2nd Series, vol. viii, p. 214.

larity of the pageants and other spectacles in honour of St George, and also enable us (and especially the descriptions of "Riding the George" at Stratford and at Lisbon) to arrive at some conclusion as to the exact nature of the ceremonies observed on the occasion in this town, for we have once more to lament the fact, that the books of this, as well as of the other religious guilds and trading companies, have not come down to us. Our local information has, therefore, again to be derived from what are rather the incidental and collateral, than direct notices on the subject, to be found in the municipal records and the parochial accounts of St Martin's. To these sources we must now refer.

Our local historian, Throsby,¹ has doubtless not exaggerated in describing the "Riding of the George" as "the grandest solemnity of the town," for it appears to have been celebrated by the whole of the inhabitants, from the highest to the lowest, as one of the greatest festivity and rejoicing, and naturally to have attracted numerous spectators from the surrounding villages.

The day for the "riding" having been fixed (for it did not always take place on St George's day), the master of the guild caused proclamation to be made at the High Cross, and elsewhere, of the time appointed, and, in all probability, special invitations were sent to the county magnates, for we find that not unfrequently the Earl of Huntingdon and others of the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood attended, and were presented with wine, &c., by the mayor and corporation, who also officially joined

¹ "History of Leicester," p. 242

the master and brethren of the guild in the procession. Nor was this a mere matter of choice, but one alike of immemorial usage and compulsion, for an express order, or "Act" of Common Hall, made in 1467, and subsequently confirmed, enjoined all the inhabitants, on being warned or summoned, "to attend upon the mayor to ride against (*i.e.* to meet) the king, or for *Riding of the George*, or any other thing that shall be to the pleasure of the mayor and worship for the town."

Owing, doubtless, to the poverty of the guild, and the inability of the fraternity to defray the expenses of their annual festival without contributions from the public, we find the Corporation, at a Common Hall, held on the 21st of September, 1498, agreeing "that every of the forty-eight that had been chamberlains, should pay to the upholding of St George's Guild by year, 6*d*, and they that had not been chamberlains, at the least, 4*d*, or more if they please." It would seem, however, that the attempt made at that period to sustain the position of the guild, did not have a permanent effect, for we find, a quarter of a century later, that the Riding of the George had, for some years, ceased to be celebrated. To enforce the performance of this ceremony for the future, it was ordered by the mayor and his brethren, at a Common Hall, held in November, 1523,¹ in the third mayoralty of Richard Reynolds, that whoever should thereafter be Master of St George's Guild, "should cause the George to be ridden, according to the old ancient custom, that is to say, between St George's day and

¹ Not 1504, as stated in Mr James Thompson's "History of Leicester"

Whitsunday," unless there be reasonable cause. In case of neglect, a penalty of £5 was to be inflicted, and if the mayor and chamberlains failed to enforce it, they were to be fined respectively 26s 8d, and 6s 8d. It was further ordained, that each of the masters who had, of late years, failed to cause the George to be ridden, should forfeit 26s 8d, and all these penalties were to be paid "to the profit of the guild." Eight years later (1531) the Corporation unanimously agreed that, "for divers considerations," Master Christopher Clough should not ride the George that year, but that, nevertheless, the whole "Act" should remain in full strength. The master paid to the chamberlains the fine of 26s 8d, "for the redeeming the Riding of the George," and we find a few similar entries in the town accounts in later years.

These particulars comprise the substance of all the information we are able to derive from the borough records respecting this ancient custom, with the exception of one suggestive entry in the Chamberlain's Account for 1536, and it will be seen they do not afford us the slightest insight into the nature of the ceremonies observed on the occasion, or whether any character, in addition to St. George, was represented in the pageant.

That the saint, however, was not the only figure in the procession of the guild is clearly evinced by this single entry, which records that, in this instance, the chamberlains of the town, and not the brethren of the guild, "paid for dressing of the dragon, 4s," and it is probable that the other characters in the legend were also represented, as, fortunately, the records of another ancient city which possessed a similar fra-

ternity, enable us to decide with tolerable certainty on this point

It happens that in the city of Norwich, in the year 1324, was established "The Fraternite and Gylde of Brethren and Sistern of the Glorious Martyr Saint George," which obtained a royal charter in 1416, and, continuing to increase in splendour and influence, in 1541, "the Court of Mayoralty, Justices, Aldermen, Sheriffs, and common Councilmen, were admitted and united to the Fraternity," and from this time the processions of the mayor and corporation, on guild days, were always accompanied by the splendid pageantry of St George's Company. Hence it followed that, unlike the festival of our own guild, which was swept away by the Reformation, it continued to be observed, with more or less of its antique splendour, down to the passing of the Municipal Corporations Reform Act, in 1835. Having also had a better fate than our own, most of the ancient accounts of that fraternity are still remaining amongst the Corporation MSS., and many interesting extracts from them are printed in Muskett's "Notices and Illustrations of the Costume, Processions, Pageantry, &c., formerly Displayed by the Corporation of Norwich."

Did our limits permit, we would gladly transfer a few of these highly curious and illustrative entries to our pages, but the following description, by the Editor, of what may be termed the Norwich "Riding of the George," must suffice. He says

"Snap, whom we all remember, was the humble representative of that mighty Dragon,¹ which was in

¹ There are two illustrations of the "Snap-Dragon" amongst

the olden time, yearly on the Guild-day, encountered and vanquished by St George The Knight, clad in complete and glittering armour, well mounted and attended by his Henchmen, was ordered by his Worship the Mayor 'to maintain his estate for two days, and hold conflict with the Dragon,' which, after much turmoil, amidst the braying of trumpets, the antics of the Whiffleis (or swordsmen), and shouts of the populace, was conquered and led captive by the Lady Margaret¹ She, too, mounted on her palfrey, richly caparisoned and led by her Henchman, was welcomed from the windows and balconies by the waving of kerchiefs, the fluttering of flags and ancients, the ringing of church bells, the firing of cannon, the music of the city waits and other minstrels The fronts of the houses were hung with pictures, tapestry, and arras, triumphal arches spanned the streets, and garlands of flowers swung across the ways and floated in the scented air Then followed the grand Banquet, where smoked the sirloin, the haunch of venison, the boar's head, the porpoise, and the 'peacock in hys prude' The glittering goblets flowed with Ypocras, Rhenish, Malmsey, and 'Dobyl-bere'

"Twas merry in the Hall, when beard's wagged all "

Such (says the Editor) was a Norwich Guild-day in the olden time, and such, prior to the Reformation must have been the general character of the pageants,

the plates to the work, and a graphic description of this last relic of the ancient pageant of St George, will be found in the "Edinburgh Review," vol 77 (1848), p 144

¹ She was sometimes called "The Lady," sometimes "The Maid," and at other times "The Margaret"

and festivities in celebration of the "Riding of the George" at Leicester, which continued "according to the ancient custom" up to the end of the reign of Henry VIII

Immediately, however, on the accession of Edward VI more stringent measures were adopted for suppressing the religious processions and other rites and ceremonies of the Romish Church, and for promoting the increase of the Reformed Religion. Then was swept away the ancient ceremony of "Riding the George," and among the various church vestments, ornaments, &c., which, in 1547, were sold by the Churchwardens of St Martin's, by the commandment of Mr Mayor and his brethren, according to the King's injunction," were "the Horse that the George rode on, price 12^d," the floor and the "vaute" that the George stood on, which produced 3^s 10^d, and the "vowte" over St George's altar, which was sold for 2^s 8^d

The suit of armour worn by the George was not sold, and, as there is no entry in the earlier accounts of its purchase, it was probably a bequest to the church, and may have been placed at the Reformation in the town armoury for military purposes. However this may have been, it reappears during the temporary resuscitation of the religious processions in the reign of Queen Mary, for in the account for 1554 we have,

"Item p^d for dressyng & hesyng sent George
harnes¹ vj^s viij^d"

¹ It is almost unnecessary to remind the reader of Shakespeare, that *harness* was formerly used for armour

"Blow, wind! come, wrack,
At least we'll die with *harness* on our back"

Macbeth

The “Riding of the George,” as well as the other public religious pageants and mysteries of the ancient faith, was, of course, finally suppressed on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, but although these representations—attended, as they were, with all the “pride, pomp, and circumstance” with which the gorgeous ritual of the Romish Church had for so many ages invested them—might be prohibited and then public celebration put down by the strong aim of the ecclesiastical and temporal power of the sovereign, these ancient amusements were not to be so easily eradicated from the hearts of the common people, whose delight they had been for so many generations. There they still held sway, and even in the present day, in remote country villages in different parts of the kingdom still linger vestiges, however rude and corrupted by traditional transmission, of those early dramatic performances, for, as Sir Walter Scott has truly observed,

“Who lists, may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery,”

adding, that “it seems certain, that the Mummers of England who (in Northumberland at least) used to go about in disguise to the neighbouring houses present, in some indistinct degree, a shadow of the old Mysteries, which were the origin of the English Drama.”¹

The “more work and less play” system which prevails at the present day in our manufacturing towns, has long since driven the Christmas Mummers from Leicester, with other old customs, but among the

¹ Introduction and note to the sixth canto of ‘Marmion’

most vivid of our boyish recollections some five and thirty years ago, is that of seeing parties of Mummers going about the town, from house to house, some of them wearing high conical caps of pasteboard, decorated with ribbons and gilt paper, and carrying wooden swords,¹ a club, frying-pan, &c —whilst,

“ White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made ”²

Our once great local festival of the year may be said to have, in one sense, survived in them, for St George was the chief character in all these performances, whilst it is a singular coincidence, that the neighbourhood of Lutteiwoith, which witnessed the rising of the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” should be, so far as we are aware, the only part of the county at the present day where the Mummers still represent, at Christmas, that offspring, as it were, of the Romish Mysteries—their play of St George—which has been orally transmitted from sire to son from the, so-called, “good old times,” for, as the poet sings,

“ England was mery England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again ”

As the last traces of this ancient custom will be inevitably swept away in a very few years, we gladly

¹ The Vice in the old Moralities was thus armed, as described in “Twelfth Night” —

“ In a trice, like to the old Vice,
Your need to sustain
Who with dagger of lath
In his rage and his wrath ”

The modern Harlequin, who is the lineal descendant of the Vice, retains the lath

² “ Marmion,” canto vi

avail ourselves of the opportunity of placing before our readers the "Mummers' Play," as performed in some of the villages near Lutterworth, at Christmas 1863, premising that here, as in other instances, by a modern innovation evidently posterior to the accession of King George I the *Saint* has been transformed into *Prince George*, son of the King of England¹

THE CHRISTMAS MUMMERS' PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

- 1 CAPTAIN SLASHER, *in military costume, with sword and pistol*
- 2 King of England, *in robes, wearing the crown*
- 3 PRINCE GEORGE, *King's Son, in robes, and sword by his side*
- 4 Turkish Champion *in military attire, with sword and pistol*
- 5 A Noble Doctor
- 6 Beelzebub
- 7 A Clown

Enter Captain Slasher

I beg your pardon for being so bold,
I enter your house, the weather's so cold,
Room, a room! brave gallants, give us room to sport,
For in this house we do resort,—
Resort, resort, for many a day,
Step in, the King of England,
And boldly clear the way

Enter King of England

I am the King of England, that boldly does appear,
I come to seek my only son,—my only son is here

Enter Prince George

I am Prince George, a worthy knight,
I'll spend my blood for England's right

¹ I am indebted to my friend Frederick Goodyer, Esq., the highly-esteemed Chief Constable of the County, for kindly instituting inquiries for me on the subject, and procuring for my use the copy of this curiosity of literature through the willing aid of Mr. Superintendent Deakins, of Lutterworth, to whom my thanks are also due

England's right I will maintain,
I'll fight for old England once again

Enter Turkish Knight

I am the Turkish Champion,
From Turkey's land I come
I come to fight the King of England
And all his noble men

Captain Slasher

In comes Captain Slasher,
Captain Slasher is my name,
With sword and pistol by my side,
I hope to win the game

King of England

I am the King of England,
As you may plainly see,
These are my soldiers standing by me,
They stand by me your life to end,
On them doth my life depend

Prince George

I am Prince George, the Champion bold,
And with my sword I won three crowns of gold,
I slew the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter,
And won the King of Egypt's only daughter

Turkish Champion

As I was going by St Francis' School,
I heard a lady cry "A fool, a fool!"
"A fool," was every word,
"That man's a fool,
Who wears a wooden sword "

Prince George

A wooden sword, you dnty dog!
My sword is made of the best of metal free
If you would like to taste of it,
I'll give it unto thee
Stand off, stand off, you dnty dog!
Or by my sword you'll die

I'll cut you down the middle,
And make your blood to fly

[*They fight, Prince George falls, mortally wounded*

Enter King of England

Oh horrible! terrible! what hast thou done?
Thou hast ruin'd me, ruin'd me,
By killing of my only son!
Oh, is there ever a noble doctor to be found,
To cure this English champion
Of his deep and deadly wound?

Enter Noble Doctor

Oh yes, there is a noble doctor to be found,
To cure this English champion
Of his deep and deadly wound

King of England

And pray what is your practice?

Noble Doctor

I boast not of my practice, neither do I study in the
practice of physic

King of England

What can you cure?

Noble Doctor

All sorts of diseases,
Whatever you pleases
I can cure the itch, the pitch,
The phthisic, the palsy and the gout,
And if the devil's in the man,
I can fetch him out
My wisdom lies in my wig,
I torture not my patients with excatations,
Such as pills, boluses, solutions, and embrocations,
But by the word of command
I can make this mighty prince to stand

King

What is your fee?

Doctor

Ten pounds is true

*King*Proceed, Noble Doctor,
You shall have your due*Doctor*Arise, arise ! most noble prince, arise,
And no more dormant lay,
And with thy sword
Make all thy foes obey[*The Prince arises*]*Prince George*My head is made of iron,
My body is made of steel,
My legs are made of crooked bones
To force you all to yield*Enter Beelzebub*In comes I, old Beelzebub,
Over my shoulder I carry my club,
And in my hand a frying pan,
Pleased to get all the money I can*Enter Clown*In come I, who's never been yet,
With my great head and little wit
My head is great, my wit is small,
I'll do my best to please you all*Song (all join)*And now we are done and must be gone,
No longer will we stay here,
But if you please, before we go,
We'll taste your Christmas beer[*Exeunt omnes*]

Several versions of the play of St George, as represented at Chiswick and the neighbourhood, in Worcestershire, and in Hampshire, will be found in "Notes and Queries," 2nd Series, vols. x, xi, and

xxii respectively, that acted in the West of England is printed in Sandy's "Christmas Tide," and that used at Whitehaven, in Hone's "Year Book," vol. ii, 1646 All these, while agreeing in substance, vary in some respects from each other, both as regards the characters and words, whilst the Leicestershire version has an affinity to the whole of them, showing one common origin—Saint (or by corruption Prince) George being the chief personage in them all, and from this fact it has been assumed that the play "has reference to the time of the Crusades, and was invented by the warriors of the Cross, on their return from Palestine, in memory of their conflicts "¹

Turning from St George, we have now to notice another pageant, the leading character in which, like that Saint (although his name certainly did not appear in the calendar), strangely enough, received, in reality, no stinted honour and patronage at the hands of the parochial clergy of the Romish Church—his festival being conducted under their auspices and superintendence This was no less a personage than the bold outlaw, Robin Hood—whose exploits have been, from time immemorial, the theme alike of ballad and of legend, and which made him the idol of his countrymen, and caused his fame to be wafted to other kingdoms The Church of Rome, acting on the same principle as was enunciated by Fletcher of Saltoun, when he said, *Give me the making of the people's ballads, and I care not who makes the laws*, was ever alive to the policy of attaching the masses to herself even by their amusements, which—in an age long ere "the Schoolmaster" was abroad, and when, indeed,

¹ "Sharpe's Magazine," for June 3, 1846

he was accessible at home but to very few disciples—necessarily reflected the nature of the people themselves—rude, boisterous, and unpolished, but, at the same time, largely tinctured by a spirit of poetry and romance

Robin Hood was, more especially, identified with the festival of May Day, which has been celebrated under various forms in this country from the earliest times, indeed, it is generally believed to have originated in the *Floralia* of pagan Rome, and that Christian Rome, in her zeal for making converts, adopted in this, and similar instances, the wise and conciliatory system of *diverting* the popular festivals from the worship of pagan deities, and appropriating them to various saints of her own ritual, rather than pursuing the desperate but more orthodox method of violently wrenching the prejudiced minds of her proselytes from practices to which, by long usage, they had become almost inseparably wedded

This strong affection for “walking in the old paths” would, of course, be still more deeply rooted in their minds, if it be true, as some writers maintain, that the May Games were of *indigenous origin*, and not so much the offspring of the mythology of classic Greece and Rome, as of the Druidic worship of Bel or Baal, which was celebrated by their Celtic ancestors on May Day (hence called *Beltan*), and which would, consequently, be still more difficult to be eradicated

In this manner, under the persuasive teaching of the early missionaries, the goddess *Flora* was superseded in her office by the “*Lady*” or “*Queen of the May*,” and, in process of time, when the redoubted deeds of that renowned hero, the mythical or historical *Robin Hood* (for much ink and learned labour have

been expended in attempts to prove both sides of the question,) had become "familiar in their mouths as household words"—sung as they were by many a wandering minstrel alike in the baron's castle and the peasant's hut—*Maid Marian* appeared in that character. Although it was an innovation on the original custom, a "King" or "Lord," as well as a "Queen" or "Lady of the May," had long ere this been annually elected to preside over the sports, and thus, in company of Maid Marian, Robin Hood now became *King of the May*, while their companions grouped about them, and helped to give a sort of rude dramatic character to the festival, with which a Morris dance was usually, but not invariably combined, and which at no time formed more than a subordinate part of the ceremony¹.

By the introduction of Robin Hood into the May Games one useful object was also attained—an object enjoined, for military purposes, by many an Act of Parliament—the promotion of the practice of archery among the people, and in which, both in war and in sylvan sport, the English had long stood pre-eminent.

The Games were celebrated not only on the first day, but frequently, at intervals, through the whole of "the merrie month of May," and they sometimes extended almost to the end of June,² chiefly on Sundays and holidays, and the patronage, or, at least,

¹ Douce's "Illustrations of Shakespeare," Soane's "New Curiosities of Literature," Brand's "Popular Antiquities," &c.

² In "Machyn's Diary" several instances of this are recorded—one in 1559 taking place on the 24th and 25th of June, and he gives the following description of one under the year 1555—"The 11 day of June was a goodly May-game at Westminster as has been seen, with giants, morris-pykes, guns and drums, and

toleration which they received from the Church is shown by many a contemporary record, but, perhaps, more emphatically still in William Roy's biting satire against Cardinal Wolsey, entitled, "Rede me and be nott wrothe, For I saye nothyng but sothe"¹ Speaking of the bishops, he says

"Their frantyke foly is so pevish,
That they contempne in Englishe,
To have the New Testament,
But as for *tales of Robyn Hode*,
With wother jestes nether honest nor goode,
They have none impediment"

And in the "Vision of Piers Ploughman," composed nearly two centuries earlier (about A.D. 1360), the author introduces an ignorant, idle, and drunken secular priest, the representative, no doubt, of the parochial clergy of that age, who makes the following confession

"I cannot parfitly my patenoster, as the preist it singeth
But I can Ryms of Roben Hode, and Randolph eir of Chester,
But of our lorde or our lady I lerne nothyng at all"

Among the extracts from our local records, under the year 1534, we have some curious particulars connected with the performance of Robin Hood's play in this town, transcribed from a fly-leaf in a book of copies of Wills, in the former Archdeaconry Court of Leicester, now the District Court of Probate. The writer, William Biller, was, at the time, the Registrar of the Court—thus showing that the play

devils, and ij morris dances, and bagpipes, and viols, and many disguised, and the *lord and lady of the May* rode gorgeously, with minstrels divers playing" (p. 89)

¹ Printed abroad about the year 1525

was, in some way, under his superintendence as an ecclesiastical official

In the first place, he expended 16^d in the purchase of a yard and a half of *Kendal* (probably for Robin Hood's or Maid Marian's dress), being that kind of green cloth worn by foresters to prevent their being too readily discovered by the deer, and so named from the place where made—the town of Kendal being, perhaps, equally famous with Lincoln for its manufacture. Thus in the old play of "Robert Earle of Huntingdon," we have the following reference to it

"Then Robin Ile weare thy *Kendall greene*
And wend to the greenewood with thee"¹

We then find Mr Registrar Biller entering his own "costs and charges, going here and there giving tendance to 'Robyn Hode,'" and for whom he bought "small trifles," and, among other things, he hired a coat for two days, at an expense of 4^d, and also borrowed a sword and a buckler, which, it appears—to use the quaint words of the writer—"he" (Robin Hood) "almost both lost, whereby I must pay for lending them, 8^d"

Our Leicestershire Master, Bishop Latimer, in his sixth Sermon before King Edward VI, has given us

¹ Ritson's "Robin Hood," vol 1, p lxi. And among the entries relating to Robin Hood and the May Game printed by Lysons ("Environs of London," vol 1, p 226) from the Churchwardens and Chamberlains' Books of Kingston-upon-Thames, we have—

"1 Hen VIII	For <i>Kendall</i> , for Robyn Hode's cote	0 1 3
	For 3 yards of white for the freie's	
	cote	0 3 0
	For 4 yeids, of <i>Kendall</i> for Myd	
	Marian's huke (hood)	0 3 4"

a striking illustration of the extreme popularity of Robin Hood's play in his time. He says, "I came once myself to a place, riding a journey homeward from London, and sent word over night into the town that I would preach there in the morning, because it was a holy-day, and I took my horse and my company, and went thither (I thought I should have found a great company in the church), when I came there the church door was fast locked. I tarried there half an hour and more, at last the key was found, and one of the parish comes to me and says 'This is a busy day with us, we cannot heare you, this is Robin Hoode's daye, the parish is gone aboad to gather for Robin Hoode.' I thought my rochet should have been regarded, though I were not but it would not serve, but was fayne to give place to Robin Hoode's men."

In course of time, doubtless from the popularity of its *dramatis personæ*, Robin Hood's play became extended to Whitsuntide, Easter,¹ and other festivals, and which consisted, more or less, of the same characters, although, in some instances, St George and the Dragon became mixed up with them,² the two

¹ Miss Baker ("Northamptonshire Glossary") informs us that "formerly in order was wont to be made by the bailiff in the court (of the lordship of Kingsthorp), for appointing a *Lord* and a *Lady* of the *May*-games on *Easter-day*, after even-song under a penalty of paying 6s 8d in case the office was refused."

² Thus in "Machyn's Diary" we read that on "the xxijth of June, 1559, there was a *May-game* with a gyant, and drums and guns, and the ix worthies, with speeches, and then *Saint George and the dragon*, the morris dance, and after *Robin Hood*, and *little John*, and *Maid Marion*, and *frier Jack*, and they had speeches round about London. The xxvth day of June the same *May-game* went unto the palace at Greenwich, playing a fore the Queen and the Council" (p 201)

principal personages being then usually designated "The Lord and the Lady," it was also entitled the "King Play," or "King Game"—a name also applied to the pageant of the "Three Kings of Cologne"—and the sport or pageant of the "Lord of Misrule" (occasionally represented at Whitsuntide, but more especially at Christmas) also partook very much of the same character

Shakespeare makes several allusions in his plays to Robin Hood and the May Games, and Sir Walter Scott, in "The Abbot," has graphically delineated, in masterly word-painting, the appearance of the various characters who might have been seen grouped together at one of these festivals, whilst many entries illustrative of these ancient pastimes, drawn from Churchwardens' Accounts, and other authentic sources, have appeared in various historical and antiquarian publications

The following transcripts, however, from the original MSS Accounts of the Churchwardens of Melton Mowbray (in the possession of William Latham, Esq.) are probably not surpassed by those of any town, as curious memorials of that popular amusement of the age to which they belong, whilst locally they possess the additional interest of appertaining to this county

"1546 Itm receyvyd in money y y^e
Lorde gathered in Wytsom Hollidays xij^s ij^d
Itm p^d to Hugh Cotterill for mendyn
of the Lordes harowe¹ ij^a"

¹ Harowes—Arrows (Halliwell's "Archaic Dictionary")

1547 Itm 1e eved of Dynis Shepard
for the getheringe of the lord at
Whitsonday xxvijs v^d

1556 Charge—

Itm I Thom^s Postarn charge me R^d of
John Feshpole & Thom^s Maye y^t
thei cheldren gatherd in the towne
at Whitsontyde & of Steven Thorne-
ton y^t he gethred y^e same yere beyng
lorde of mysse rule v^h xix^s viij^d

Itm R^d of bertylmew Schaw y^t he
getherd beyng loide at Est^r xx^s

Itm I R^d of Steven Schaw y^t he geth-
erd & hys company at Robyn Hoods
playe ij yeires xxix^s viij^d

Itm I R^d of John Hopkyns in p^{te} of
Robyn Hoods money v^s

Itm I R^d of Robert Holynsworth in
p^{te} of y^e money y^t hys son getherd at
Whitsontyde a^o 56 xxvijs viij^d

Itm I R^d of Thom^s Richardson &
Rechard Myln^r that they gatherd viij^s iiij^d
S^m xiij^h ix^s xij^d

1557 Itm R^d of Robert Hollyngwort
of y^e lords money y^t was gathered
att Wyssonday xlvijs viij^d

Itm R^d att Wyssonday in oblasounes vijs vj^d ob

Itm R^d of Robert Bocher for y^e lords
money we Received y^{tt} att Allhallo-
tyde ix^s ij^d

Itm rec^g in y^e ouerplusse of y^e offer-
ings of the processions at Whissonday viij^d

1558 Rec^g off y^e ofhyng^e ffor Meltō
att Whytsontyde viij^s iiij^d

Reſ off the lord off myſſrule xv^s"

" 1559 The Reckonyng and Accompt of me
Xþor Whythed for money receavyd the xxij day of
May A° 1559 the lordes mony at Easter and Whyt-
sonday A° *ut supra* as hefewth more playnly ap-
perythe—

I charge me reacevyd of the lords mony
at Easter & at Whitsontide A° 1559 S^m lj^s ob^d

Itm R^d of M^r Payte for stone that he
toke out of the ffyelde xi^d

To^{ll} of this my charge Lij^s ob^d"

[The above money was expended in repairing the
bridges and causeways of the town]

" 1563 This is the Reckoning and Accompt of
me Rob^t Odam Junior, being chosen & nomynated
the Loide of Melton at Whitsondaye A° 1563 to
gather the Devocyon of the Towne & Cuntrye wth
is to be bestowed for the Repayring and mending the
highe wayes

Charge —

Imp̄mis R^d of Hawe [Holy] Thorsday at
the chosinge of the Lorde and Ladye xviij^s x^d

Itm at the gatheringe of the malt &
whete^l xvij^s

Itm of Whitson mondaye xxv^s iiij^d

Itm of Tewsdaye xxij^s v^d

Itm of Wedensdaye xliij^s

Itm of Thoſdaye xi^d

To^{ll} charge v^{li} x^s xj^d

Discharge (*unter alia*) —

Itm to the pip^p (piper)² of hawe Thorsdaye xi^d

¹ For the Whitsun Ales See Brand's "Popular Antiquities," &c

² "Tom the Piper" was a well-known character in the May

Itm for spyce for the cakes	xx ^d
Itm to the my foote men	vij ^s
Itm to the ij buttleis	xx ^d
Itm for neyles to the lordes hall	ij ^d
Itm to Thom ^s Kenne for bylding the lordes hall ¹ & mending a borde & vj tressells	vij ^d
Itm to bartillmewe Allan for playing of thorsday in Whitson weeke	vj ^d
Itm a pottell of Wyne for my lady Attredde	vij ^d
Itm in Cakes for her	iii ^d

Games He is thus mentioned by Drayton, in his third
"Eclogue"—

"Myself above Tom Piper to advance,
Who so bestirs him in the Morris Dance,
For penny wage"

In the woodcut on the title page of "Kemp's Nine Dales Wonder Performed in a Morris from London to Norwich," (1600), Will Kemp's attendant, Thomas Slye, is represented in this character, with pipe, tabour stick and tabour, and the coloured frontispiece to the second volume of Knight's "Old England," copied from a painted window, represents this and the other figures in an ancient morris-dance

¹ In the account of the churchwardens of St Helen's, Abingdon, ("Archæologia," vol 1, p 24,) for the year 1556, there is an entry, "For setting up Robin Hood's Bower," this, like the "lordes hall," at Melton, was probably a wooden booth or framework, covered with green boughs Phillip Stubs, in his rare book, entitled "The Anatomie of Abuses," (London, 1585, f 92 b,) gives a highly curious description of the "Lorde of Misserule" and his attendants He says, "Aboute the Churche they goe againe and againe, and so forthe into the Churche-yard, where they have commonly their sommer haules, their Bouers, Arrows, and Banquettynge Houses set up, wherein they feaste, banquet, and daunce all that daie, and (peradventure) all that night too And thus these terrestrial furies spend their Sabbath day" The "lordes hall," at Melton, was doubtless of the same kind and for the same purpose

Itm to Rayne browne for bringing the Lord's gowne from the Lavnde ¹	vij ^d
Itm to Will ^m Madder for playing ij dayes	v ^s iiiij ^d
Itm to Denys Shepardi for poits	j ^d
Itm to Nycolys Swashe for dressing my lords hoise, for b ^r eyd, & for his paynes	xiiij ^d
Itm to John Downes for ij ^c [cccc] lyve- ryes ² & the payntine of ij staves	ij ^s iiiij ^d
Itm for vij chikens to my lady Perin	xviij ^d "

[The remainder of the account consists of numerous payments for labour, stone, &c, for the repairs of the highways and bridges]

The account for 1553 contains the following entries —

" Itm payd to John Hynmane & to Robert Bagworth for rynginge of y ^e g ^r eat bell for Master Latimore Seimon	ij ^d "
And, " Itm payd for Master Latymer charges	ij ^s iiiij ^d "

Let us hope that the worthy bishop's visit to our hunting metropolis did not take place on Robin Hood's day, for, from the foregoing proofs of the popularity of these games at Melton, we fear that even in this, his native county, his audience would have been but few in number!

¹ *Laund'e*, a laundress (Hilliwell's "Archaic Dictionary")

² These "liveries" were badges formed of paper, satin, or other material, with some device thereon which were distributed among the spectators. Thus, among entries in the "Northumberland Household Book" (quoted by Ritson, vol 1, p cii), we have the following —

' 15 C of leveres for Rob n Hode	0 5 0
For leveres, paper and satyn	0 0 20"

The pageant of Robin Hood, under its title of "The King Play," or "King Game," is not unfrequently recorded as having been represented in churches,¹ and among the Loseley MSS is a deposition taken before a Surrey magistrate, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, which contains an incidental illustration of this custom. It begins as follows —

"Coram me Henr Goringe, ar xij^o die Januar 1578
George Longherst and John Mill ex^d sayeth, that on Sondaye last they were together at widow Michelles house, in the parish of Hascombe, and there delyvered their maies to kepe till they came agayne, and sayde that they wold goo to Hascombe Churche, to a *kyng playe* w^{ch} then was there. And sayeth y^t they went thither and there contynued about an houie, at which tyme the sonne was then downe "²

As might be anticipated from the expenses incurred by the Registrar of the Archdeaconry Court, as before mentioned, these plays were represented in some, if not all, of the churches in this town, for, under the year 1520, we have the following entry among Mr. Carte's "Extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Mary's" —

"Received of the *King's Game* £2 6 0"
But although, as we have seen, these and other representations, ill-suited to the sanctity of those edifices, frequently took place in the churches under the guidance of the parochial authorities, the ancient

¹ In the "Antiquarian Repertory," vol 1, p 194, is printed from the Parish Register, 1566, an inventory of "*the King and Queen's apparel of Fordwich*," in Kent, and which, with other things, was sold in 1574

² "Notes and Queries," 2nd Series, vol xii, p 210

Canons of the Church forbade the clergy to participate in these sports, for the thirty-eighth Canon of the Council of Worcester, held in 1240, contains the following explicit prohibition, in which the "King Game" is expressly mentioned — "Prohibemus etiam clericis," &c., "We also forbid cleigmen to join in disreputable games or dancings, or to play at dice, *neither shall they allow games of King and Queen to be acted (fieri)*, nor permit ram-raisings, nor public wiestlings"¹

Although thus forbidden, it is evident that the prohibition must have been allowed to become a dead letter, for the games certainly continued to be performed in the churches up to a late period. Thus, in 1560, the churchwardens of St Martin's, in this town, received "of Basforde for *the lord & the lady* xxij^dob", and in the preceding year's account we have an entry of —

"Rec^d for the *mawrys daunce of Chyldren* iiij^s"
Nor is this a solitary entry of the kind, for in the accounts of St Margaret's Church, Southwark, already referred to, we have the following, between the 30th and 34th Henry VI —

"Also receyued in dawsing money of
the Maydens iiij^s viij^d"
which (although Mr J. P. Collier² says he is not able to explain) there is no doubt refers to a morris dance, as, very probably, does also the following, in 1456 —

"Item, paid to Harvy for his Chyldren
vpon Seynt Lucy day xx^d"

¹ See Chatto, "On Playing Cards," p. 62

² "Papers of the Shakespeare Society," vol. II, p. 43

The Morris or Morisco dance is supposed to have been brought into England about the year 1332, by our famous earl, "old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster," on his return from Spain. The castle of Leicester, as is well known, was his favourite residence, and as the morris dance would, of course, be exhibited on the occasions of royal visits and other princely festivities, it may readily be imagined that it would soon become popular among his retainers and the inhabitants of the town generally, in a somewhat similar, although more homely guise.

In addition to these games connected with Robin Hood, in which of necessity only the few were actors, and the people generally spectators, and which, as we have seen, were in many instances performed after "Evensong" at the church, there were other sports, beginning before sunrise on May-day, in which all could join, without distinction of age, sex, or condition, from the lowliest peasant to royalty itself, for it is on record that even King Henry VIII and Queen Katherine did not disdain to "ride a Maying," and we read in Chaucer's "Court of Love," that, early on May-day,

"Fourth goeth al the Court, both most and lest,
To fetche the flouris fresh, and braunch and blome "

The sports of May-day have formed one of the favourite themes of many of our older poets, including Milton, no less than of our present Laureate, who has so beautifully and touchingly sung of them in his "May Queen," whilst Shakespeare, among other allusions to them, makes one of the lovers in the "Midsummer Night's Dream" say—

“ If thou lov’st me then,
Steal forth thy father’s house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a leighe without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do obseruance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee”—*Act i, sc 1*

On that day, long ere the sun had tinged with his golden beams the eastein horizon, the tuneful bells of our town and village churches were, in the olden time,

“ Still wont to usher in delightful May,
The dewy silence of the morning hour
Cheering with many a changeful roundelay,”

and warning the watchful maidens that it was high time for them to steal into the gem-bespangled fields to wash their faces with the early “ May-dew,” to make them beautiful, as it was believed to do, or, what doubtless had an equal attraction to the enamoured and blushing fair one, to gather it as a potent charm of love, with the inward and gratifying thought towards the object of her affections that—

“ Its pearls are more precious than those they find
In jewell’d India’s sea,
For the dew-drops love might serve to bind
Thy heart for ever to me ”

Again, soon after midnight, the lads and lasses met, and, by two and two together, with merry songs, went into the woods “ to bring home the May”—

“ Hail, bounteous May!
Thus we salute thee with *our early song*”—*MILTON*

Then was cut the stately maypole, and, trium-

¹ Lover’s “ Songs of the Superstitions of Ireland,” where, it appears, the custom of gathering the May-dew is still practised

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“ If thou lov’st me then,
Steal forth thy father’s house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee”—*Act I, sc 1*

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phantly bearing in their arms flowers and branches of hawthorn and other trees, the lads and lasses escorted it into the town in procession, with music, songs, and great rejoicing. The hawthorn and green boughs were then used in great profusion, to decorate the porches, doors, and windows of the houses—a custom of remote antiquity.

The maypole having had its summit ornamented with garlands of flowers and streamers of ribbons, was set up on the village green, or in the market-place, or other open space in the town (in the larger towns several maypoles were erected), and dancing, mirth, and general festivity took place around it,

“From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer’s day”

It may readily be conceived, that this seeming return, for a time, to the happiness and innocent amusements of an Arcadian life, was not without its abuses. One cause of complaint was the frequent injury that was done, not only in the neighbouring forest, but also by trespassers on private property, in the promiscuous cutting of boughs and maypoles. It was probably to check the mischief arising from this practice that it was found necessary to enforce a regulation made by the Corporation on the 20th of November, 5th Edward VI, entitled “An Acte for Cuttyng of Bowes,” which provided that “if there be any man, woman, or child, taken or known to have broken or cut down, in the summer time, or any other time, any oak boughs, hawthorn boughs, or any other boughs, *to set at their doors or windows*, out of any close, garden or orchard about this town of Leicester, or within the liberties of the same, to for-

feit for every time taken or proved with such default
xi^d, and then bodies to prison, there to remain
during Mi Mayor's will and pleasure ¹

As we shall have hereafter more particularly to notice the ancient custom of dancing round the maypole in connection with the violent outcry and active opposition raised against it by the Puritans, we will now—putting aside, for the present, the description of those ruder spoils of the people not already referred to—return to the more important branch of our subject, the rise and progress of the English drama.

As a step in advance of the early religious Mysteries, a new kind of drama, called *Morals* or *Moral Plays*, and subsequently, *Moralities*, became popular prior to the reign of Henry VI. They were so termed from the characters employed not being scriptural, as in the miracle plays, but allegorical or symbolical. These plays, however, did not entirely supersede the miracle plays until the reign of Elizabeth.

Another new species of entertainment called *Interludes*, which were short pieces of a highly humorous character, and which, as the name implies, were usually represented in the interval between the feast and the “banquet,” or, as we should now term it, dessert, were introduced by John Heywood, in the reign of Henry VIII.

The oldest known comedy in our language, called “Ralph Roister Doister,” was written by Nicholas Udall, Master of Eton, prior to the year 1557, and first published in 1566 or the following year, but

¹ “Town Book of Acts,” p 36

the earliest play which was regularly divided into acts and scenes, was the "Fenix and Poniex" of Lord Buckhurst, which was performed in 1562, whilst one of the earliest known companies of players, travelling under the name and patronage of one of the nobility, was that of the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III. The mention of these players occurs in the household book of Lord Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk (Shakespeare's "Jockey of Norfolk"), at Christmas, 1482-3, in the following terms—

"Pleyers] Item on Crystemas daye, my
Lord gaff [gave] to my players of my
Lord of Gloucestres ij^s ij^d"

There is, however, a still earlier entry, under date of 9th of January, 1481-2, in the same MS., respecting the players of Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex, who thus, so far as the evidence goes, is entitled to be looked upon as the earliest encourager of dramatic entertainments, such as they then existed. The entry is as follows—

"Item, to Senclowe, that he paid to my Lord
of Essex men, plaiers xx^d"

Although we thus hear of the players of the Earl of Essex twelve months earlier than those of the Duke of Gloucester, it is very probable, as Mr J. Payne Collier has suggested,¹ that the Duke had set the example, for he was a great lover of music, as well as a patron of the drama. Whilst Duke of Gloucester, it is known that he had a body of Minstrels, as well as what are called "Shalms," attached to his household, and after he ascended the throne he was the first

¹ "Papers of the Shakespeare Society," vol. II, p. 88.

monarch who issued an arbitrary order for taking boys with good voices from the choirs of cathedrals, &c., in order that they might sing in the Chapel Royal, or for the amusement of the court¹

Little did Richard think when he was thus constituting himself the powerful patron of the players of his age, that ere long his body was to find an unhonoured burial in our town, and his life and death form the immortal theme of one of the grand productions of the greatest of dramatic poets, and by which he was to be held up to the execration of all succeeding ages

Although both Henry VII² and Henry VIII had each two companies of actors in their pay, who, as well as the players of the nobility, travelled about the country, representing plays wherever they could obtain adequate reward, yet it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that the establishment of a theatre, properly so-called, took place

The plays were frequently performed in the halls of corporations, but more commonly on moveable stages or scaffolds erected in the yards of inns (which then usually had galleries running round them on each story) or in the open air

In Leicester the performances usually took place in the Town hall, the upper end of the hall being used as the stage, and the hooks and pully to which the

¹ "Papers of the Shakespeare Society," p 89 See also Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 34

² Many curious entries of payment to players in maste's, waits, &c., of noblemen and corporate towns, occur among the "Privy Purse Expenses of Henry the Seventh" printed in the "Excerpta Historica," pp 85 133

curtain was attached may still be seen affixed to one of the beams of the roof.

It is stated that at this period few, if any, of the theatres had moveable scenes, and that the mechanism of them seldom went beyond a painted chair or a trap-door, whilst the want of scenery seems to have been supplied by the simple expedient of writing the names of the different places where the scene was laid in the progress of the play, and which were displayed in such a manner as to be visible to the audience —

“The air-blest castle, round whose wholesome crest
The matlet, guest of summer, chose her nest—
The forest-walks of Aiden’s fair domain,
Where Jaques fed his solitary vein,
No pencil’s aid as yet had dar’d supply,
Seen only by the intellectual eye”

The profession of an actor had now become a common one over the whole kingdom, and companies of players acting as the servants of the queen and of the nobility were constantly travelling round the country, whilst, in order to restrain the number of itinerant performers, an Act passed in 1572 “for the punishment of rogues, vagabonds, and stiddy beggars,” prohibited all players wandering abroad, except players belonging to a baron, or a nobleman of higher degree, and authorized to play by licence under his hand and seal. A copy of one of these licences, granted by the Earl of Worcester to his players, will be found among our extracts, under date of 1583

The earliest visit to Leicester of any of these companies of players, of which we have any evidence, took place in the year 1530, when a reward of 3*s* 4*d* was given to “my lade prynce plears,” being the

company of the Princess, afterwards Queen Mary, who was born on the 11th of February, 1516-17, and before she had completed her sixth year, as Mr Collier informs us,¹ revels, including disguisings and dramatic representations, were held in her presence and for her entertainment. The same writer informs us² that the King, the Queen, and the Prince had separate companies of players, who acted before the court at Christmas, but he has not noticed, what our records show to be a fact, that the Princess Mary had also a company at this early period.

The Princess's players again visited the town in the following year, as did, also, those of her royal father, Henry VIII, who received a similar reward of 3s 4d from the corporation. There is no evidence of any other company having played here until 1537, when payments were made to the Earl of Derby's, the Lord Secretary's, and the Prince's (afterwards Edward VI) players, and it is only after an interval of ten years, when, in 1547, the players of Sir Henry Parker, afterwards Lord Morley, were rewarded, that payments to players become of regular annual occurrence in the accounts.

In the following year visits are recorded of the players of the Lord Protector Somerset, and the King's minstrels, and to each company a reward of 5s was given.

In 1549 there was "paid to Lockwood, the King's Jester, 11s 11d," and similar payments were made to him on other occasions during the life of Edward VI, whilst, during the reign of Queen Mary and

¹ "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 89

² *Ibid.* p 118

part of that of Elizabeth, his name, under the designation of "the Queen's jester, whose name is Lockwood," is of almost annual recurrence as the recipient of a similar gratuity of 3*s* 4*d*, which, it would seem, he was entitled, by custom or otherwise, to claim as his fee, for a similar payment was made to the Queen's jester at Lyme in 1569, as recorded in the town archives¹ This is a new name to add to those of Picolf, Will Summers, Archee Armstrong, and the other royal jesters, whose names have come down to us²

Mary ascended the throne in July, 1553, and very shortly afterwards issued a proclamation for "redresse of prechairs, prynctais, and playars," and which for a time checked dramatic performances, which had previously been used as a means to advance the principles of the Reformation. For more than two years, says Collie,³ the order appears to have been effectual for the purpose, after which date the renewal of the representation of plays was attempted, not, indeed, in London, but in the country

In the account for 1555 we have a solitary visit of the Queen's players recorded, for Mary, it appears,

¹ See Roberts's "Social History of the Southern Counties," p 37

² John Heywood, one of our early play-wrights, and with whom Sir Thomas More delighted to exchange many a lively joke, was a royal jester at the courts of Henry VIII and his two daughters, and he was succeeded by the celebrated *Dick Taylor*, as Queen Elizabeth's jester. We find no mention of *Lockwood* at the period, and did the name not occur several times in the accounts we might suppose it to have been an error—Heywood being the person intended—but this could not have been the case

³ "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 159

still continued to keep up her domestic establishment for court revels and entertainments on the same footing as during the reign of her father.¹ We may be assured that the performance on this occasion did not contain any "naughty and seditious matter to the slander of Christ's true and Catholic religion,"² but it was probably one of the old miracle plays, which, as we have already mentioned, were revived during this reign to inculcate and enforce the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion.

In consequence of attempts to revive secular plays, an order was made in the spring of 1556 for the entire suppression of dramatic amusements,³ and, with the exception of one other visit of the Queen's players in 1557 (and who were perhaps specially exempt from this order), no further entries relating to them appear in the Borough accounts during Mary's life.

Soon after Queen Elizabeth's accession, in November, 1558, as stringent measures were adopted against the representation of the miracle plays and similar performances, which were calculated to impede the progress of the Reformation, as Mary had before adopted against those of an opposite tendency, at the same time an impetus seems at once to have

¹ "Annals of the Stage," p 164.

² Letter from the Privy Council to the Earl of Shrewsbury, President of the North, dated 30th of April 1556, complaining of "certain lewd persons, to the number of six or seven in a company, running themselves to be servants unto Sir Francis Leek, and wearing his livery and badge on their sleeves, (who) had wandered about and represented certain plays and interludes" — *Annals of the Stage*, vol 1, p 160.

³ *Ib d*, p 159.

been given to the re-establishment of the secular dramatic companies, but some delay would naturally occur ere they visited the provincial towns, as they had done before their suppression, indeed, a proclamation under the Queen's hand was issued on the 7th of April, 1559, prohibiting the performance of all plays and interludes 'till Alhallows tide next ensuing,' probably to allow time for a due supervision of companies of players to be arranged, and which was effected by a later proclamation on the 16th of May¹ Thus, in the first year of Elizabeth's reign, Her Majesty's company was the only one that visited the town, whilst the account for the following year clearly indicates the great impulse which dramatic performances had received through the patronage of the Queen, gratuities having been given by the corporation, beyond what was gathered among the audience, to three companies of players, being those of Lord Willoughby, Sir Henry Parker, and Lady Suffolk

In 1561 the Queen's players again experienced the liberality of the corporation, and on the same or a subsequent occasion money was also given to "one player that played alone" After this year the payments to players begin to be of regular and frequent occurrence, and in addition to those of the Queen, the Earls of Oxford and Worcester, Lord Robert Dudley (afterwards Earl of Leicester), and various other noblemen and gentlemen, whose visits are recorded, we have the first mention of one of the companies of corporate towns, the "Players of Coventry," having performed on "Twelfth Even," 1564, whilst the "Players of Hull" made their first appearance

¹ Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 168

on the 12th of September, 1568, and were succeeded in 1574 by "the Players that came out of Wales"

At this period also there were several juvenile companies of players, whose performances were very popular. Among these juvenile actors were the "Children of the Revels," and the choir boys of St Paul's, Westminster, Windsor, and the Chapel Royal, all of whom represented secular plays. Shakespeare, at a later date, has alluded to the popularity of these child-actors in "Hamlet,"¹ as "an airy of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't these are now the fashion, and be at the common stages." Several payments to these juvenile companies will be found under various years in the Accounts.

In this town plays were in one instance at least, but more probably frequently, performed by local juvenile actors, for in 1564 there was "paid to the children that play'd under Mr Pott, 5s," this being, doubtless, a dramatic representation by the scholars of the Free Grammar School, of which Mr Pott was the master.

Among the other payments about this time we also meet with frequent mention of the musicians or minstrels of various noblemen, and of the jesters of the Queen, the Lord Loughborough, and others, as well as many entries respecting the waits and noblemen's bearwards, to which we shall have later to refer when we come to treat of those subjects.

In 1582 the Queen's company of players, which had been newly formed in that year by the best

¹ Act II, sc 2

actors selected from the other companies¹ (one of whom was the celebrated Richard Tarleton, and another was Robert Wilson), visited the town, and they were again rewarded in 1584

Two of the most curious and interesting documents illustrative of the history of the stage, which our archives contain, will be found transcribed from the Hall papers, under the year 1583. They relate to a dispute between the Mayor and the Earl of Worcester's players, arising out of a quarrel which took place here between that company and the players of the Master of Her Majesty's Revels, and they are valuable, if for nothing else, as showing the practices of these itinerant companies of actors on visiting a town, and also as containing copies of the licences granted to them by their patrons

It appears from these papers, that on Tuesday, the 3rd of March, 1583, certain players, who said they were the servants of the Queen's Majesty's Master of the Revels, came before the Mayor and two other justices, at the Town Hall, and required licence to play, and for their authority showed an indenture of licence from Edmund Tylney, Esq., Master of Her Majesty's Revels, of the one part, and George Hay-sell, of Wisbeach, in the Isle of Ely, gentleman (the chief player of the company), of the other part. Permission being given, the company remained in the town, in all probability giving performances each day, until Friday, the 6th of March, on which date a note was appended to the above entry to the effect that certain players came before Mr Mayor and the justices at the Hall, who said they were the Earl of

¹ Collier, vol 1, p 255

Worcester's men, and asserted that the aforesaid players were not lawfully authorized, and that they had taken from them their commission (but which was untrue, for they forgot their box at the inn in Leicester, and so these men got it), adding that Haysell, "the chief actor," was not here himself, and that they had sent the commission to Grantham, to the said Haysell, who dwelt there.

The other paper is also dated on the 6th of March, and refers to an application for permission to perform in the town, made by the Earl of Worcester's players on the same day, either before, or, as seems more likely, subsequent to the former dispute, for, on this occasion, no less than eight magistrates, in addition to the Mayor, were on the bench.

After setting forth the names of the Earl's players, (who were Robert Browne, James Tunstall, Edward Allen, William Harrison, Thomas Cooke, Richard Johnes, Edward Browne, and Richard Andrews) also an abstract of the terms of their licence, the memorandum states that Mr Mayor gave the aforesaid players an angel towards their urine, and willed them not to play that day, as the time was not convenient. About two hours afterwards they met the Mayor in the street near Mr Newcomb's house, and again craved licence to play at their inn, who told them that they should not, upon which they went away, and said they would play whether he would or no, and in despite of him, with other evil and contemptuous words, of which several persons were witnesses. Moreover, these men, contrary to Mr Mayor's commandment, went with their drum and trumpets through the town, in contempt of Mr Mayor, neither would come at his commandment by his officer.

The two men who so much abused Mr Mayor were William Pateson, Lord Harbald's man, and Thomas Powlton, the Earl of Worcester's man, probably two of the inferior actors who were sent round the town to give notice to the inhabitants of the intended performance, as neither of the names appears in the licence. The contumacious players afterwards submitted themselves, expressing sorrow for their words past, and craved pardon of the Mayor, desiring his worship not to write to their master against them, and so, upon their submission, they were licensed to play that night at their inn, they having promised upon the stage at the beginning of their play to show unto the hearers that they were licensed to play by Mr Mayor, and with his good will, and that they were sorry for the words past.

The simple facts of this affair, which must evidently have caused considerable commotion in the town, appear to be as follow —

The players of the Master of the Revels, on coming to the town, attend before the Mayor, produce their licence, and, according to the usual course of proceeding, receive his permission to perform. The Earl of Worcester's players subsequently arrive, and finding themselves forestalled by a rival company, pick a quarrel with them, and endeavour to make it appear that they are not licensed players, failing in this, and the Mayor refusing to allow them to perform in the town, they set his authority at defiance in the manner before described.

It will thus be seen that the Earl of Worcester's players were not the most quiet and peaceably disposed individuals — they having had to beg the Mayor's pardon for their riotous conduct towards

him—and that they were not very scrupulous as to the means they used to obtain their object, when we find them surreptitiously taking possession of the licence belonging to the players of the Master of the Revels, and then accusing them before the Mayor and justices with not being duly authorized to play, which charge, if proved, would have rendered them liable to be convicted and punished as rogues and vagabonds, for without such authority,

“Beggars they are, with one consent,
And rogues by Act of Parliament”¹

In addition to the general interest which these two MSS. possess, the latter document has also a special interest from its supplying some new facts connected with the early career of Edward Allen, or Alleyn, one of the most eminent actors of the Shakespearian age, who subsequently founded Dulwich College, and who at the period of this transaction was in his seventeenth year.

Mr. Collier states in his “Memoirs of Edward Alleyn,” that his father dying when he was only four years old, his mother subsequently married a person of the name of Biowne, an actor as well as a “habet-dasher,”² and that the earliest date at which we hear of him in connection with the stage, is the 31st of

¹ The Queen's proclamation of the 16th May, 1559, “forbid al maner Intelludes to be playde, eyther openly or privately, except the same be notified beforehende, and *licensed within any cite or toun corporate by the Mayor*,” who was commanded “to arrest and enprison the parties so offending for the space of fourteene dayes or more, as cause shall nede”

² According to Halliwell (“Archaic Dictionary”), this word was formerly used to denote a schoolmaster

January, 1588-9, when he bought for £37 10*s* the share of "playing apparels, play-books, instruments, and other commodities," which Richard Jones owned jointly with the brothers John and Edward Alleyn, and their step-father

It will be seen that our notice of him, as an actor and a member of the Earl of Worcester's company, is six years earlier than Mr Collier's, whilst the document also contains the name of Alleyn's step-father, Robert Browne, as the head of the company, and also that of Richard Jones, just mentioned, who was also, doubtless the writer of the "curious letter" to Alleyn, on going abroad with an English company of players, which is printed in the "Alleyn Papers,"¹ in which work also the name of James Tunstall, another of the company, appears as a witness to a deed

With the exception, perhaps, of these players of the Earl of Worcester, the company which at this period most frequently visited the town, was that under the patronage of Sir Robert Dudley, afterwards the all-powerful Earl of Leicester, which had been formed prior to the month of June, 1559, when he addressed a letter in their behalf to the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord President of the North, which is to be found in Lodge's "Illustrations of British History"² At the head of this company was James Burbadge, the father of the celebrated tragedian and associate of Shakespeare

These players were here on the 12th of November, 1563, and again on the 1st of July in the following

¹ Edited for the Shakespeare Society by Mr Collier, p 19

² Vol 1, p 307

year On the 14th of June, 1567, a reward of $3s\ 4d$ was given to the Earl of Leicester's musicians, and in 1570 the sum of $8s\ 6d$ was paid to the Earl of Leicester's players more than was gathered, a gratuity being also presented to them on another visit in the following year About the same time, probably whilst on this provincial tour, they had performed before Queen Elizabeth at Saffron Walden—the Town Treasurer's accounts of that year containing an entry of a reward of $2s\ 6d$ paid "Lord Leicester's men," whilst Queen Elizabeth was there¹

They were here again in 1574, on which occasion, either on their way here or in returning towards London, they visited Stratford-upon-Avon, and received six shillings and eight pence from the town funds for their performance,² which was doubtless witnessed by William Shakespeare, who was then in his eleventh year, and who, as the son of one of the leading members of the corporation at that time, would, of course, be admitted to witness the first performance of the company at the Guild Hall, which was always "the bailiff's," or chief magistrate's "play," being paid for out of the public money

¹ Nichols's "Prog. Eliz." 1, 281, edit 1823

² The entry is quoted in Knights's "Life of Shakspere," (Pict. edit.), p 121, from the town records, under the year 1573, but as the old town accounts extended over portions of two years, viz., from Michaelmas in one year to the same festival in the ensuing one, Mr. Knight has probably placed all his extracts under the year when the account in which they appear commences, whilst our extracts are placed under the year to which they actually belong so far as internal evidence would enable us to classify them, and this probability is confirmed by a comparison of other entries relating to companies of players visiting alike, Stratford and Leicester

It was in this year that the Earl of Leicester obtained for his company the first royal patent granted in this country to performers of plays, and from this time, unless they were here in 1577¹ (when we have merely an entry in the account of the gross sum given to "pleyars of enterludes and to bearewards" this year, without the names being mentioned), then visits appear to have ceased until 1585, they having, probably, in the interim, established themselves permanently in London at the Blackfriars Theatre, which had been built by James Burbadge in 1575²

The celebrated tragedian, Richard Burbadge, or (as more commonly written) Burbage, whose name is immortalized as the original representative of the leading characters in the plays of Shakespeare, and especially of that of Richard III, doubtless performed in Leicester on many occasions about this period. He was a member of the Earl of Leicester's company, of which, as we have seen, his father was the head, and for whose benefit, as already mentioned, their powerful patron had obtained from his royal mistress a patent under the Great Seal, dated the 10th of May, 1574, as a special privilege for his own servants, James Burbadge, John Perkin, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wylson, to perform "comedies, tragedies, enterludes, and stage-playes," as well within the city of London, as within any cities, towns, or boroughs, throughout the kingdom³

¹ They visited Stratford-upon-Avon in this year (Knight's "Shakspere," Pict. edit., p. 121)

² Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol. 1, p. 226

³ The original order under the Privy Seal, dated 7th of May,

In 1589 this company, which performed at the Blackfriars and Globe Theatres, was called "the Queen's Playeis," and, sometime subsequently, "the Lord Chamberlain's Servants," under which designations we find several notices of their visits to this town, and, finally, on the accession of James I they received the title of "the King's Players" whilst in 1603—ten days only after the public entry of James into London—a patent under the Great Seal was granted to Lawrence Fletcher, *William Shakespeare*, *Richard Burbage*, and others, their associates, to play "comedies, tragedies, histories, enterludes, moralls, pastorells, stage plaies, and such like, either at their usual house, called the Globe, in Surrey, or "within anie towne halls, or mout halls or other convenient places" throughout his dominions¹

Of the frequent visits of Burbage to this part of the country, and of his thorough identification in the popular mind with the character of Richard III, as delineated by Shakespeare, we have a striking proof in the "Iter Boeale" of Bishop Corbet, written about the year 1620

The witty bishop, passing through Leicester, visited the town of Bosworth, for the purpose of inspecting the battle field, where the last of the Plantagenets fell pierced with wounds,

"Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death"

He says—

"Mine host was full of ale and history,
And on the morrow when I ee b ought us nigh

1574, for the preparation of the patent is proved in *extenso* in Collier's "Annals of the Stage," 1, 211

¹ Collier, vol 1, p 349

Where the two Roses join'd, * * * * *
 * * * * * Why he could tell
 The inch where Richmond stood, where Richard fell
 Besydes what of his knowledge he could say,
He had authentick notice from the play,
 Which I might guesse, by's musting up the ghosts,
 And policyes, not incident to hosts,
 But chiefly, by that one perspicuous thing,
Where he mistooke a player for a king
 For when he should have say'd, King Richard dyed,
 And call'd—A horse! a horse!—he *Burbidge* cry'd"

Thus substituting the name of the player for that of the character which he represented

There is a tradition current amongst us that Shakespeare himself performed "with a company of strolling players" in our town hall

We fear that this interesting tradition is not susceptible of direct proof, owing, unfortunately, to the names of the players being so rarely mentioned in our records, but it is, in all probability, true, indeed, it seems difficult to account for the origin of such a tradition without some foundation in fact

We have seen that Shakespeare was a member and shareholder of the company originally formed under the patronage of the Earl of Leicester, and that these players frequently visited the town, partly, perhaps, from their all-powerful patron deriving his title from it, but still more from the fact that the Earl's sister, the Countess of Huntingdon, was a frequent resident in Leicester,¹ and from whom and her lord they would naturally expect countenance and support in their dramatic performances

¹ At the Earl of Huntingdon's town residence, called "the Lord's Place," in High Street, of which the lofty tower (now cased externally with brick) is almost the only vestige

In 1585, when their visits were resumed after a temporary discontinuance, the poet, who was then in his twenty-first year, was doubtless a member of the company,¹ in which, four years later, his name appears in a certificate as the twelfth on the list, but in the licence of 1603 it has risen to the second place, being preceded only by that of Lawrence Fletcher

Will it be drawing too wildly upon the imagination, to suppose it probable, that to the frequent presence of Shakespeare in our interesting old town, the world is indebted for the first germs of those poetic thoughts being implanted in his mind, which afterwards produced those imperishable fruits of his genius—"Lear" and "Richard III" I think not

My lamented friend, James Francis Hollings, has alluded in his "Roman Leicester" to the striking similarity which the wild scenery described in "Lear" bears to that of Charnwood Forest, from which he believes it to be drawn² whilst during Shakespeare's early career there were doubtless many aged persons living in Leicester, whose sires had witnessed less

¹ Aubrey, writing in the year 1680, says, "This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, *I guess about eighteen* [*i.e.* about 1582], and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well."

² He says, "To us it can be no unpleasing matter of supposition to imagine that, in addition to his obligations to our legendary history for the plot of his great drama, the poet was also indebted to localities in our neighbourhood for portions of its scenery, and that the wild and desolate heaths of Charnwood Forest were connected in his imagination with that terrible outburst of anguish and despair, displayed amidst the fury of contending elements, in comparison with which the phrenzy of Oedipus and of Orestes are but faint and ineffectual portraiture."

than a century before the imposing spectacle of Richard's progress through the town at the head of his army, and had beheld the brutal indignities afterwards perpetrated upon his inanimate remains¹

We may imagine "the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling," as, with slow and meditative step, he paced the scenes inseparably associated with this tragic episode in our country's annals, or—following the course of that ancient road,² along which the unconquered legions of imperial Rome had borne aloft their eagle-standards to victory—gazed with wrapt attention on the mossy portals of the abbey, doubtless conjuring up and depicting on the tablet of his mind the vision of the fallen and dying Cardinal passing through them for ever from the outer world, when, suddenly hurled from his lofty pinnacle of greatness, he was reduced to appear as a humble suppliant even for a grave—

¹ Our county historian, Burton, ("Descrip. Leic.," edit 1777, p 44), writing in 1622, says, "The inhabitants [of Stoke, near Bosworth] have many occurrences and passages yet fresh in memory, by reason that some persons thereabouts, who saw the battle fought, were living within less than forty years, of which persons myself have seen some, and have heard of their discourses, though related by the second hand." A singular instance of a remote tradition, in connection with Richard III passing through very few links down to the present generation is to be found in "Notes and Queries" (1851). A correspondent writes, "I have an aunt, now eighty-nine years of age, who in early life knew one who was in the habit of saying—'I knew a man, who knew a man, who knew a man who danced at court in the days of Richard III.'

"Thus there have been but three links between one who knew Richard III and one now alive."

² The Fosse way

"O father Abbot,
An old man, broken with the storms of state,
Is come to lay his weary bones 'mong ye,
Give him a little earth for charity "

But our limits forb'd us to linger upon this subject, however enticing its investigation may be, and we will now, therefore, only add that the best assurance we have of the truth of our local tradition—and which, indeed, affords us almost the certainty of direct proof—is to be found in the recorded fact, supplied by the Chamberlains' accounts, of the numerous performances, extending over a series of years, which were given in this town by the company to which Shakespeare belonged, under their new designation of "the Queen's Playeis," their visits on several occasions taking place as frequently as twice a year. The natural conclusion is that even if not present in every instance, the poet-actor must not unfrequently, have taken part in the representation in our town hall of some of his own immortal creations, and, insignificant as the thing itself may be, it is surely something, even yet, to be able to gaze on the very pulley which has evolved to draw aside the curtain and disclose a Shakespeare on the stage—the living, breathing form of him—the greatest of dramatic poets the tercentenary of whose birth a whole people upon whose empire the sun never sets is about to celebrate and one of the greatest of whose glories it is that their land gave birth to that master spirit, who ' was not for an age, but for all time '¹

¹ It may not be devoid of interest to note here the fact, that a Thomas Shakespeare, 'gentleman,' was a inhabitant of Lutterworth in the early part of the reign of James I and was not unprobably a relative as well as a contemporary of the

The custom now prevailed of rewarding the various companies of players in proportion to the rank of their respective patrons—thus the Queen's players usually received a fee of 40*s*, those of the Earl of Worcester and of others of similar rank 20*s*, whilst those of a baron or person of lower degree had but half that amount, in special instances, however, these gratuities were increased

The frequency with which the authorities of the town were called upon to pay for the performances of these itinerant companies, or to give them money in order to get rid of them without a performance under the Mayor's auspices, was, at times, evidently deemed a heavy tax upon their pockets, or, rather, pouches, and thus we find that on more than one occasion steps were taken to diminish the expenditure for these and other purposes by the adoption of regulations or bye-laws on the subject As early as the year 1566 the corporation, by common consent and agreement, at a common hall, held on the 22nd of November, made "An Act against waisting of the town stock" This "Act" set forth that "whereas before this time the town stock hath been and is much decayed by reason of giving, carrying, and bestowing of great gifts, as well in the country as in the towne, to noble men and women, and also to others that have sundry times resorted to the said town of Leicester, and also at the banquets of venison, of gifts and rewards given to players, musicians, jesters, noblemen's bearwards, and such like charges, and is

poet His signature is attached to a letter addressed by the authorities of Lutterworth to the Mayor of Leicester, in 1611, respecting the plague, which is now before me, and which is given in the Appendix under that year

like daily to be more and more to be decayed, except reformation thereof be speedily had, therefore it is enacted, &c, that from and after the said day there shall be no such great allowance paid, delivered, or allowed out of the town stock for any such expenses that shall happen, but that the spenders thereof, as at the banquets of venison, plays, bear-baitings, and such like, every one of the Mayor's brethren, and of the forty-eight, being required or having summons by the commandment of Mr Mayor for the time being, to be there, shall bear every one of them his and their portion" It further provided that no maner of gift should be given by the Mayor without the consent of four or five of the "ancients" of his brethren, and as many of the "ancients" of the forty-eight, except five shillings and under, which the Mayor was to be allowed to bestow "for the honour of the town" as often as occasion should move him This Act was confirmed at a common hall, on the 4th of January, 1570

Again, on the 16th of November, 1581 we find the following order made at a common hall — "It is agreed that from henceforth there shall not be any fees or rewards given by the chamber of this town, nor any of the twenty-four nor forty-eight to be charged with any payments for or towards any beawards, bear baitings, players, plays, enterludes, or games, or any of them, except the Queen's Majesty's or the Lords of the Privy Council, nor that any players be suffered to play at the town hall (except [as] before except[ed]), and then but only before the Mayor and his brethren, upon pain of 40s to be lost by the Mayor that shall suffer or do to the contrary"

Although these orders, when made, were "for

ever to continue," custom and the players appear to have been too strong for them, for, as the accounts show, they frequently became more or less relaxed, and then a new order to the same effect was again entered on the books, to be once more only partially complied with. Thus, by another order of common hall, on the 30th of January, 1606-7, the corporation agreed "that none of either of the two companies shall be compelled at any time hereafter to pay towards any plays, but such of them as shall be then present at the said plays the King's Majesty's players, the Queen's Majesty's players, and the young Prince his players excepted, and also all such players as do belong to any of the Lords of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council also excepted, to these they are to pay according to the ancient custom, having warning by the mace-bearer to be at every such play."

It is not unlikely that, in making these restrictions on dramatic performances and other popular amusements, many of the members of the municipal body were not solely actuated by the money question, but also, probably, by their peculiar religious views. At an early period Puritanism had found its way into Leicester, had gradually become prevalent among many of the leading inhabitants, and was, at least, more prominently exhibited after Henry Earl of Huntingdon came to reside here, for to his opinions and wishes—as those of the great man of the district—the corporation were very subservient, and hence they were prepared to enforce them on the people by adopting more stringent regulations for religious observances on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as on Sundays.¹

¹ Thompson's "Hist. Leic.", p. 262

This Earl was a zealous Puritan and the acknowledged leader of the party in the country, as his brother-in-law, the Earl of Leicester, was at court. Like other noblemen, he had a company of players among his retainers, but his chief patronage was given to "hot-headed" puritan preachers, many of whom visited Leicester under his auspices, and, after holding forth in lengthened discourse at St Martin's, were presented with wine by the corporation. This custom, in later times, when Puritanism became rampant in the town, was regularly observed towards every preacher who visited it, and their name was "legion," as the accounts testify and, if we may judge from these entries, they did not despise the "creature comforts," for, like Jack Falstaff, they would appear to have quaffed "an intolerable deal of sack." Probably they found this necessary to recruit exhausted nature after their prolonged and energetic labours, when

"Pulpit, drum ecclesiastick,
Was beat with fist, instead of a stick."

In the chamberlains' account for 1622 there are no less than thirty entries of presents of wine to different preachers—a gallon being no unusual quantity to be given to an individual!

Although the Puritans, as a body, were strongly opposed to what they termed "the profane and godless" amusements of the stage, these did not form the butt at which the shafts of their invectives were chiefly aimed, indeed, one of their writers Stephen Gosson, in his "Schoole of Abuse, Containing a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, plaiers, iesters, and such like caterpillers of the Commonwealth" (1579), admits that "as some of the players are farre

from abuse, so some of their playes are without rebuke, which are easily remembered, as quickly reckoned" "These playes," he continues, "are good playes and sweete playes, and of all plays the best playes, and most to be liked, worthy to be soung of the Muses, or set out with the cunning of Roscius himself, yet," he adds, "are they not fit for every mans dyet neither ought they commonly to be showen" And John Northbrooke, a preacher, makes an admission to the same effect in his "Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes, with other idle Pastimes" (printed about 1577) In this extremely rare and curious work, which is "made dialogue wise," the writer, in reply to the inquiring question of *Youih*, "Are there any other good exercises?" makes *Age* say, "Yes, as scholleis to make orations, to play good and honest comedies, to play at tennise, and such like, &c" Thus it probably occurred that the Earl of Huntingdon, rigid Calvinist as he was, still conformed so much to the fashion of his age as to have his company of dramatic retainers, and that the corporation of Leicester, notwithstanding their puritanical proclivities, still extended countenance and support to some of the companies of players who visited the town at this period

If, however, the Puritans, comparatively speaking, shot but a few bolts at the stage and its disciples, there were other popular amusements at which they directed a whole flight of barbed and envenomed shafts, and waged a war of extermination, and utterly without mercy

These objects of their aversion were, chiefly, the May games and morris dances, which have been already described in connection with Robin Hood's

Play Northbrooke, in his "Treatise" before quoted, thus declaims against them ¹—“What Sabbath dayes, what other days are there, nay, what nightes are ouerpassed without dauncing among a number at this time? In summer season, howe doe the moste part of our yong men and maydes, in earely rising and getting themselves into the fieldes at dauncing? What foolishhe toyes shall not a man see among them? What vnchast countenaunces shall not be vsed then among them? or what coales shull there be wanting that may kindle Cupid's desire?—truly none What adoe make our yong men at the time of May? Do they not vse nightwatchings to rob and steale yong trees out of other men's giounde, and bring them home into their parische with minstrels playing before? and when they have set it vp, they will deck it with floures and gairlandes, and daunce round (men and women together, moste vnseemly and intolerable, as I have pioned before) about the tree like vnto the children of Israell that daunced about the golden calfe that they had set vp Douce ² treating of the ancient English morris dance remarks that ‘durng the reign of Elizabet’ the Puritans made considerable havoc among the May-games by ‘heire preac’nings and invectives Poor Maid Marian was assimilated to the Whore of Babylon, Friar Tuck was deemed a remnant of Popeiv and the Hobby-hoise a impious and pagan superstition, and they were at length most completely put to the rout as the bitterest enemies of religion King James’s ‘Book of Sports’ restored the Lady and the Hobby-hoise, but during

¹ Page 175

² ‘Illus’ ‘*ions of Shakespeare*, p 595

the Commonwealth they were again attacked by a new set of fanatics, and, together with the whole of the May festivities, the Whitsun-ales, &c, in many parts of England degraded."

In this respect we find that the Leicester Puritans of the Elizabethan age, both clerical and lay, were not a whit behind their confiees elsewhere in a zealous crusade against those amusements, which it must, however, be admitted, whilst pleasant and innocent enough in themselves, were, by abuse, doubtless made the cause of much immorality. Thus, on the 1st of June, 1599, we find that a poor man, one Richard Woodshawe, a shoemaker, was gravely accused before the Mayor and magistrates of the town of having spoken in favour of these pastimes, and was thereupon bound over to take his trial for this offence at the next assizes. His accusers were Joshua Johnson and Richard Moseley, inmates of Wigston's Hospital, who deposed that on the previous day they heard Woodshawe say "that if we do live, we shall see other gates dancing and maying than is now," and also, that "the preacher was a liar, for that, in his sermon, he said Mr Mayor caused a maypole to be taken down and cut in pieces, and that the said maypole was pieced and set up again," which was not true, for it was not pieced, but that part which was left was set up again. Woodshawe, on being interrogated as to the words he had spoken in the "New Hospital," admitted having said "that within these six years it may be there will be more morris-dancing in the town," and it would appear that he had subsequently disclosed "the names of the morris-dancers on Tuesday night in Whitsun week last," for we find among the Hall papers a list thus headed

containing the names of six persons, the last being
“Richard Woodshawe, shoemaker, their accuser”

The circumstances which had occasioned this arbitrary display of puritanic zeal are more fully explained in the written defence, which Woodshawe at his trial in the following month handed up to the judge—either Sir Edmund Anderson or Justice Glanville. He states that at Whitsuntide last past, Mr Mayor gave leave to divers young men of the town to fetch in a maypole, and to set up the same in the town, which they did, with shot and morris-dancers, but that his worship was presently incensed, for so soon as the maypole was set up he caused it to be pulled down again, and for that “your poor orator” said that within these six years he hoped to see more morris-dancing than ever he had seen, for that he heard one Mr Hunter say that “when he came to be Mayor of Leicester,¹ he would allow a morris, being out of service-time,” whereupon, and for the said speeches so used, “your poor orator,” not meaning any hurt therein, was, by Mr Mayor, bound over unto the assizes, to answer the same before your lordship.

He then begs the judge’s gracious favour in his behalf, that he may be released from his bonds on his just trial, and he was released accordingly.

Similar arbitrary attempts of the Puritans to put down these favourite sports of the people led a few years later, to a serious riot in the town, respecting

¹ The Mayor at this time was that Thomas Clarke, of the Blue Boar Inn, whose name has become famous in connection with the tradition respecting Richard III’s bedstead. Mr Hunter became Mayor in 1603-4, but we fear he was unable to perform this promise.

which we have among the Hall papers several documents containing some curious particulars

This collision between the populace and the authorities of the town occurred in the month of May, 1603, and the first information we have respecting it is to be found on a decayed fragment of paper which has originally contained a copy of a letter, without date, from the Mayor, Mr James Ellice, to the Earl of Huntingdon, Lord Lieutenant of the County

So far as the very imperfect state of this document, at its commencement, enables us to ascertain, we gather that the Mayor "advertises" the Earl that he has taken upon himself to apprise his honour's nephew, Sir Henry Hastings, on behalf of his lordship's brother, that much timber from his woods was spoiled, stolen, and cut up, and brought to Leicester for May-day, without the knowledge of the Stewards of the Fair in their regular watch at night "Now so it was," he then proceeds, "may it please your good lordship, the stewards notwithstanding, there was the same night many maypoles by an unruly band and a confused multitude of base people set up in the street, and the stewards' watch too weak to suppress the outrage" He then states that on the Sabbath-day (the first of May) all these unruly persons were gathered together round a maypole set up near to some place in Leicester, which we cannot ascertain, where he found a great number of people, who, in defiance of him, were proceeding in their sports "with a most tumultuous uproar and outcry, until Sir William Skipwith¹ came in, and dealing some-

¹ He had a mansion in the High Street, called "The White House"

what roughly, and laying hold of one Wood, a butcher, a most disorderly lewd person, brought him to me, whom I presently committed Proclamation of departure was made to the rude audience, which was then contemned, and seconded the next day with 'mairices,' and a great number of idle, rude company, many of them armed with shot,¹ following them, morning and evening, the whole town throughout" The Mayor concludes his letter by stating that he thought it his duty to advertise his lordship of this, and to crave his assistance, countenance, and direction The Earl's reply is not recorded, probably he had a personal interview with the Mayor and others of the town authorities, whose next proceeding appears to have been the collecting of evidence against the ring-leaders in the affair One result of this step is to be found in the next paper, being a copy of the deposition of "Savings of Will^m Saunderson of the Old (i.e. Trinity) Hospital, beadsman," taken before the Mayor and Mr. Gillott on the 4th day of May

This witness deposed, that coming towards Simon "Yng's," or Inges, door in Leicester, he found divers women sitting there, on Saturday night, the last day of April, Symon Ynge then raging at the setting up of the maypole standing near to his house in the South-gate, and who said that they (meaning the maypoles) were suffered in no town but here in Leicester Whereupon he, the "Examinant," said that if the King did allow of them, then we ought not to gainsay it "The King," said he (the said Symon Ynge), "I will obey Queen Elizabeth her

¹ "Shot" is here used simply as denoting fire-arms, which were discharged, as at the present day, as a sign of honour and rejoicing, and were not carried for the purpose of intimidation

laws" Then said the Examinante, "The Queen is dead, and that her laws were now the King's laws" Then the said Symon Ynge answered again and said, "The King had no laws" Then said the Examinante to him, "Take heed what you say, for fear of punishment, for hath not our King made many knights by law, and sent out his writs by law, and made two pieces of Scottish coin current here in England, and all by law" Saunderson was bound in the sum of £10 to give evidence against Symon Inge at the next assizes

On the 11th of May we find the Mayor addressing another letter to the Earl of Huntingdon, in which he craves pardon for his long silence, which might seem to be great negligence, especially being so honourably and worthily directed and advised in a matter of such consequence and great importance, and explains that the true reason of it was that he might the more effectually search forth and the more certainly inform his honour of the principal offenders and chief agents, as well abettors as actors in the late tumultuous disturbance of their peaceable government in this corporation, of whose names, he adds, he has made a short catalogue, which he presumes to present to his lordship, humbly beseeching that such exemplary punishment may be inflicted upon them, that others may be terrified to offend in the like The Mayor then states that whereas a report has since been suggested that he had given countenance to the morris dancers, who so disorderly assembled themselves together, he assures his honour that it is and hath been far from him and his affection, for, to his grief, he sees daily theft set up before his eyes, tumult and confusion upholden and unpunished, and

both former and present government disgraced. He has therefore made his complaint (being the mouth of all his brethren), and prayed the aid of his honour's honourable place of lieutenancy, humbly desiring his lordship's strength to be added to his weakness, yet his honour shall ever find him willing and ready in his place to further his Majesty's service so far as either life goods, or will can extend unto. He concludes with the assurance that so soon as he shall receive the Earl's warrant and order for taking down these stolen maypoles, &c, his diligence in the speedy execution thereof shall well appear, and so humbly craving pardon, he also humbly takes his leave.

Then follows the catalogue above mentioned, of "the names of the morrice dauncers," consisting of nine persons, "William Johnson, servant to Mr Hugh Hunter" (whose name it will be recollect'd occurs in the former proceedings in 1599, as in favour of a morris dance), standing at the head, whilst the last is that of "John Wood, butcher," described as "a disorderly person, him (says the Mayor) have I bound with two sufficient sureties to appear before the judge at the next assizes." This was the same man who was seized and delivered to the Mayor by Sir William Skipwith.

We have then the names of seven others, being "such as were furnished with shot," and the catalogue is completed by "the names of them that have been punished," comprising six names, the last being that of "Roger More, late soldier."

We then learn that George Langley, painter, acknowledged having painted the maypole near to the Talbot, and for so doing was paid 2*s* by the before-mentioned William Johnson, Mr Hugh Hun-

ter's servant, he also said that he painted the maypole in the Humberstone Gate, and for this he was paid a penny by one William Salesbury, servant to William Hunt, Chamberlain of Leicester. From this it seems evident that some members of the corporation were in favour of these sports, and it is not improbable, notwithstanding his disclaimer of the report to that effect, that the Mayor himself was secretly favourably disposed towards them, but was fearful of compromising himself with the puritanic Earl.

We are again without the Earl's reply to Mr Mayor's letter, but, probably, by his desire, we find that some days later (on the 16th) Symon Ynge, against whom his accuser Saunderson was bound to appear at the next assizes, was himself interrogated before the Mayor and Mr Gillott, as to the conversation that took place between him and Saunderson on Saturday night, the last of April. His explanation was that he was sitting at his own door, when Saunderson came to him and said he could not see the maypole at his own door for the elm tree standing at Pollard's door, and Saunderson asked him what harm the pole did, to which he answered not anything at all concerning the maypole, and that Saunderson then said that maypoles were set up in all places as the King came, and that the King allowed them in his book. Whereupon he (Symon Ynge) said he wished Saunderson to be contented and let us be ruled by Mr Mayor and the justices (the cunning fellow!), adding that he thought the King, as yet, had made no new laws, but those that were in the Queen's Majesty's time, and that then Saunderson replied and said, "hath not the King made certain knights by

law, and also allowed two Scottish pieces of coin, the one of gold, the other of silver, to be current in England by law," to which he answered nothing, and, to his remembrance, there were no further speeches between them

On the 18th a "Common Hall" was held, but we have no record of the result of the discussion on this all-absorbing topic of the time among the townspeople, beyond a "Memorandum," that, "in regard of the manifold inconveniences and disorders which we have seen, by experience, usually to accompany the setting up of maypoles in our town, by reason of the multitude of rude and disorderly persons therein, for that reason they have been heretofore for many years forbidden and restrained amongst us"

During all this time the town was in a very disturbed and unsettled state for, notwithstanding the proceedings taken by the Mayor and justices, and the very natural fear of the resentment of the powerful nobleman then neighbour at their contumacy against his authority the people still would not quietly submit to be thus deprived of their old amusements, for we have another record of further disorder and riotous conduct arising out of the taking down the maypoles by direction of the Earl, as sought for in the Mayor's letter of the 11th of May

On the 19th of that month William Leppington, the younger, slater being examined before the Mayor, deposed that on Monday night the 16th of May (after the maypole was taken down in Belgrave Gate), Anthony Fletcher said to Mr. Gillott (who, as a magistrate, appears to have superintended its removal) "Who shall pay William Leppington for taking down the maypole?" to which Mr. Gillott answered and

“willed” the said Fletcher to forbear his speeches and go to bed, whereupon Fletcher replied, “Well! I will cool you both (meaning Mr Gillott and Lepington) for this” He further deposed that the same Monday night Agnes Watkin, the wife of John Watkin, of Leicester, shoemaker, said to him, “*Thou art like unto like, as the devill sayd to the Collyar*”¹

On the 16th one of the King’s messengers arrived with four proclamations “by writ under his highness’s seal,” dated at Westminster the 9th of May, one of them prohibiting “all bear-baitings, bull-baitings, interludes, common plays, or other like disordeined or unlawful exercises or pastimes to be kept or used upon any sabbath day,” and on the 20th a proclamation, equivalent to the modern “Riot Act,” was read to the people, but even this did not effectually put some of them to silence, for on the following night Thomas Tyers, being in the Town Hall, said in the hearing of several persons that “he would see Mr Mayor hanged as high as the top of the hall (the wicked wretch!) before he would be at his command, either for the cutting down of maypoles or anything else”

And on the same night that contumacious and disorderly rascal, John Wood, the butcher, who did not

¹ A comic interlude or moral-play, by Ulpian Fulwell, was printed in 1568, entitled “Like will to Like, quod the Devil to the Collier,” and in Henslowe’s “Diary,” (p 181), it is stated that on the 28th of October, 1600, the Earl of Pembroke’s men played a piece at the Rose called “The Like unto Like” Butler evidently refers to this proverb in “Hudibras,” (canto 11, l 350), when he says, “As like the devil as a collier” We do not find it, however, in either Kelly’s “Proverbs of all Nations,” or Bohn’s “Handbook of Proverbs” The latter gives “Like to like, as Nan to Nicholas”

care for either Mayor or knight, had the audacity to deliver these speeches to Mr Mayor himself, namely, "that he heard one say unto him, that Tom Pestall should report to one sitting upon a bulk¹ in Leicestershire, that talked of Mr Sacheverill, that the said Mr Sacheverill *was above Mr Mayor*," and Wood, nothing daunted, told the Mayor to his face that he "did enough to make the whole town to rise against him," adding, that he (the Mayor) and others "had done him wrong, but he would be righted, or else he would spend twenty pounds."

Rude and boisterous as John Wood, the butcher, was, we may, perhaps, according to his light, and his own belief, set him down as a rough, uncultured patriot—one who, at all hazards, stood up in defence of the rights and liberties of himself and his fellows, which, he felt, were unjustly invaded by the people being thus precluded from the enjoyment of their old accustomed sports, through the narrow-minded tyranny of a set of bigotted fanatics,² who, in the words of Butler,—

¹ The stall or open front of a shop. The front of a butcher's shop, where the meat is laid, is still called a *bulkar* in Lincolnshire.—HALLIWELL

² In 1644—the year before the Puritan inhabitants so bravely defended the town against the Royal forces—we find the two Houses of Parliament passing an Act which set forth that "because the prophanation of the Lord's day hath been heretofore greatly occasioned by maypoles (a heathenish vanity generally abused to superstition and wickedness) the Lords and Commons do further order and ordain that all and singular maypoles, that are or shall be erected, shall be taken down and removed by the constables, borsholders, tythingmen, petty constables, and churchwardens of the parishes where the same may be, and that no maypole shall be hereafter set up, erected, or suffered to be within this kingdom of England or dominion

“Were so perverse and opposite,
 As if they worshipp'd God for spite
 That with more care keep holy-day
 The wrong, than otheis the right way
 Quailel with minc'd pies, and disparage
 Their best and dearest friend—plum-porridge,
 Fat pig and goose itself oppose,
 And blasphem'e custard throught the nose ”

And, without much exaggeration, we may perhaps look upon him as a sort of prototype of Gray's rustic patriot—

“The village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood ”

But we have not yet done with the commotions and complications arising out of this May-day business, for we find Mr Nathaniel Sampson, the master of Wigston's Hospital¹ (of which the Mr Sacheverill before mentioned was Confrater), brought before the Mayor and justices for words in his sermon on May-day, spoken in dispraiagement of the state of things under the new rule of King James, who had succeeded Elizabeth on the preceding 24th of March, and who, as is well known, was favourably disposed towards the popular sports of the age. In this transaction we again find the name of Mr Thomas Hunter holding a piominent place—he being, in all probability, the leader of the more catholic party in the municipal body, and upon whom the Mayoralty was conferred at the next election. This charge against

of Wales,” &c., &c. Well may a recent writer exclaim, ‘ Mercy on us! what an aimy to put down a poor maypole!’—*Soane's New Curiosities of Literature*, vol 1, p 247, note

¹ Some particulars respecting him will be found in the body of the work

the Puritan preacher was preferred by "Christopher Walton, gentleman, servant to the King's Majesty," who, in his examination on the 19th of May, before the Mayor and Mr Robert Heyrick, said that on the same morning he heard Mr Hunter report "that John Knight, of Leicester, tanner, should say, that he heard Mr Sampson, in his sermon, say that *gold is turned to silver, silver to brass, and brass to dross*" Mr Sampson "is charged with these speeches, and utterly denyeth the same," whereupon Richard Tydesdale, "Comer of Jarsey," deposed that "upon May-day in the afternoon, at the sermon in St Martin's church, in Leicester, he heard Mr Nathaniel Sampson in his sermon deliver these speeches, *viz*, 'that we have had a golden world these 44 years,¹ and from gold to silver, and from silver to brass, and from brass to iron, and from iron to clay'" It does not appear if anything further was done respecting this charge, but among the papers connected with it is one written in a very bad and illiterate hand, containing the following rude lines, evidently intended for rhyme, but written without regularity in this respect —

"The first of May,
Being the Sabbath day,
In Queen Mary's time
It was a silver mine,
And in Queen Elizabeth's time
A golden mine,
And now it is call'd
A leaden mine,
Worsei than copper,
A diossy mine

God save King James the First and of Scotland the VI "

¹ i.e. during Queen Elizabeth's reign

The minds of the common people of the Shakespearean age were, undoubtedly, greatly unsettled, from the frequent changes which had been taking place in religion and government, and were full of superstition and the belief in strange and absurd prophecies, which were eagerly caught up, and spread from mouth to mouth, telling of fearful things to come, before the happy return of the golden age, which was expected to take place, and when it was to be "a pleasant golden world"

Among the extracts are a few which we have selected rather as illustrating allusions made by Shakespeare to the usages, manners, and superstitions of his time, than from any direct bearing which they have upon our subject

The foremost of these in importance and interest are transcripts of the depositions of various inhabitants taken before the magistrates of the town, in October, 1586, relating to a supposed prophecy of Merlin, and the then expected execution of Mary Queen of Scots, who had been brought as a prisoner to Leicester on the preceding 23rd of September, and remained two nights, on her way to Fotheringhay Castle, to be put upon her trial, and it is a singular coincidence that that event took place on the 14th of October, at the very time that these persons were being examined at Leicester, touching reports concerning her. This unhappy Queen had previously been brought to Leicester in November, 1569, and then, as on this occasion, was an inmate of "Lord's Place," the Earl of Huntingdon's mansion in High Street, and it was, of course, owing to her presence here in 1586, that these "prophecies and sayings" became so rife in the town

The other extracts refer to the "Gossips' Feast" at christenings, the use of the name "Emmanuel" at the top of letters, &c

Merlin, the supposed author of these prophecies, was a British magician, living about the year 500, and was deemed the prince of enchanters—one who could outdo the enchantments of all others, but who, at length, fell a victim to one of his own spells, through his misplaced confidence in a lovely, but vain and wicked woman

Geoffrey of Monmouth has written the fabulous history of Merlin in his British History, and the wizard was a prominent figure in the ancient romances of chivalry, telling of the wondrous deeds of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and he has been the theme of many a poet's song from that age to our own

Spencer says,

"It Merlin was, which whylome did excell
All living wightes in might of magickē spell"¹

And our present Poet Laureate describes him as,

"—— The most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also Bard, and knew the stany heavens,
The people called him Wizard"²

Whilst even at the present day there are not a few ignorant, superstitious people who still are credulous enough to put faith in his prophecies, and those of his modern representatives, "Raphael" and "Zad-

¹ "Faerie Queene," book 1, c viii, 36

² "Idylls of the King," p 102

kiel," among whose disciples, a year or two ago, was a London Alderman, who actually took occasion, on the bench of justice, to draw public attention to what he believed to be the fulfilment of the prophecy of one of these impostors, foretelling the decease of the lamented Prince Consort

A native of our own county, who, as regards his birth, was contemporaneous with Shakespeare, afterwards, became famous as an astrologer and prophet. This was the celebrated, or rather the notorious, William Lilly, the friend of Elias Ashmole, who was born at Diseworth, near Castle Donington, in 1602, as he tells us in his curious and amusing autobiography¹

He is termed by Butler, in his " Hudibras,"² the "English Merlin," and he figures, at length, in the third canto of the poem as the "Sidiophel" of the same inimitably facetious writer

The first person examined before the Mayor and others, on the 13th and 14th of October, 1586, respecting these pretended prophecies, was one Charles Dubignon, who, in reply to the questions put to him, said that on Michaelmas even, "or some other night

¹ It seemed in accordance with "the eternal fitness of things" that Castle Donington should possess a conjurer who had power over the evil spirits, for a rare tract by Philip Stubbes, author of the "Anatomy of Abuses," informs us how "the devil very strangely appeared" in June, 1581, to a woman named Joane Bowser, dwelling at that place, the incidents of which event are set forth in a long poem in which the following advice is given—

"And now, O gentle Donington, be mindful yet of me,
Who have with paines contriued this same for loue I beare to
thee

Abandon, then, out of thy streates all mirthe and minstrelsie,
No pipers, nor no dauncers vile, in thee let extant be"

² Part I, c. n, 1 346

thereabouts," he came home about eight or nine o'clock, when he thiew away two or three eggs which his master had ordered to be given to him, "to roast" for his supper. He then went on to say that he heard Edward Sawford, "the Embroiderer," say that if the Queen of Scots were put to death (as it was supposed she should be) there was like to be very great troubles in England, and that if there were any such "hurly-burly,"¹ it would go hard with the strangers now in England. Also, that the said Sawford told him that Merlin saith in his book, that after such troubles ended, then it would be a pleasant, golden world, and, further, that if there were not present remedy this Parliament for the relief of the poor, he supposed that the common people would rise, or great sin would be, and that Merlin's prophecy was that troubles should come about Windsor. Dubignon then inquired of Sawford how he knew this, and whether he had Merlin's book, to which he said "No," but he heard it of "a very friend" of his, and that the book was in Yorkshire.

Another person, one William Byard, but who was commonly known as "Old Byard," was charged with having said that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth men should be "breeched like bears and coated like apes, and women painted like images to behold great pride and lechery, in young and old great talk of God and no deal served, nor any of his laws much regarded, faith and honesty most hated, with flattery abundantly, carrieth away the victory but God,

¹ "When the *hurly-burly's* done"—*Macbeth*, act 1, sc 1. This word is explained by Peacham, in his "Garden of Eloquence" (1577), as signifying an *uproar*, or *tumultuous ster*.

of his omnipotency, will not so deluded be " He was also accused of having said that "after Michaelmas a Parliament should be holden, whereunto many should come of the noblemen, and some not come, and they that did come should commune of such matteis as they came for, and not agiee, insomuch that they shall fall at square, and some blows shall be given, and so should paite every man to his home Then should they go together on the eais within themselves, insomuch that hei Majesty should be in such fear that she should flee into Wales Then should the enemy approach the land, and proffer in many places, and where he proffered most to mean least to enter, but at West Chester the enemy should enter and invade the land, and the crown won and lost once or twice Then should such as have racked rents and wronged the poor, and hoarded up their corn, go to the post, and three battles fought, one at West Chester, the other at Coventry, the thid at London

" Then should a man and a boy be ploughing, and shall see a man clothed in black, bare-headed, running over the field, the boy shall say, 'Master, who is yonder?' The master shall say, 'A priest, let us kill him, for it is they that have brought all this trouble' Then, in their greatest trouble, should a dead man come, and, after his name shall be known, all shall run unto him, he shall give unto every man his own wife and land, and shall set four rulers in the land, then shall he go forth and conquer, and never cease till he come to Jerusalem, and there die by the will of God, and be buried between the three Kings of Cologne" Many more particulars respecting Merlin and his prophecies, King Arthur, Queen Elizabeth,

and the events which were to come to pass—when men “should be coated like apes, and breeched like bears”—as rehearsed by “Old Byard,” will be found in another lengthy deposition, among the extracts under this year, signed by Charles Dubignon, but to which our space will only permit us to refer, and it will also be seen that the parties accused were brought before the judges at the assizes for trial on the charge

Shakespeare twice alludes to Merlin and his prophecies. In “King Henry IV”¹ after Owen Glendower has been descanting on the “omens and portents dire,” which heralded his nativity, and Hotspur’s unbelieving and taunting replies to the chieftain’s assertions, the poet, on Mortimer’s saying, “Fye, cousin Percy! how you cross my father,” makes Hotspur thus reply—

“I cannot choose sometimes he angers me
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-wing’d griffin, and a moulten raven,
A couching lion and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith ”

And again, in “King Lear,”² he makes the fool say—

“I’ll speak a prophecy ere I go
When priests are more in word than matter,
When brewers mar their malt with water,
When nobles are their tailors’ tutors,
No heretics burn’d, but wenches’ suitors

¹ Part I, act iii, sc 1 A play entitled “The Birth of Merlin,” the first known edition of which was printed in 1662, has been attributed to the joint labours of Shakespeare and Rowley. It will be found amongst Shakespeare’s Doubtful Plays

² Act iii, sc 2

When every case in law is right,
 No squire in debt, nor no poor knight,
 When slanders do not live in tongues,
 Nor cutpurises come not to throns,
 When usureis tell their gold i' the field,
 And bawds and whores do churches build,—
 Then shall the realm of Albion
 Come to great confusion
 Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
 That going shall be used with feet
 This prophecy *Merlin* shall make, for I live before his time'

This witty satire was evidently levelled against the "prophecies" attributed to Merlin, which were then prevalent amongst the people, and it is even not improbable that it may have been prompted by the very one for discussing which some of the inhabitants of this town were taken into custody, for the play of "King Lear" appears to have been composed during Elizabeth's reign, although not printed until that of her successor

Whilst Shakespeare thus pleasantly directed the shafts of his ridicule against these idle prophecies, Lord Bacon attacked them in a graver manner indeed, the statutes directed against them in Shakespeare's day show that the effect which they had upon the people was very considerable, and not to be despised by their rulers

In his essay "Of Prophecies," Bacon, after quoting "The trivial prophecy which I heard when I was a child, and Queen Elizabeth was in the flower of her years,

'When *hempe*¹ is spone,
 England's done,'"

¹ i.e. The initials of the sovereigns, Henry, Edward, Mary, Philip, and Elizabeth

which he does not scruple to explain in a way that might disarm public apprehension, adds, "My judgment is that they ought all to be despised, and ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside, though, when I say despised, I mean it as for belief, for otherwise the spreading or publishing of them is in no sort to be despised, for they have done much mischief, and I see many severe laws made to suppress them"

Passing on to another subject, we find in Shakespeare's "King Henry VI"¹ the following dialogue between Jack Cade and the Clerk of Chatham—

"*Cade* Come hither, sirrah, I must examine thee What is thy name?"

Clerk Emmanuel

Dick They use to write it on the top of letters,—'twill go hard with you

Cade Let me alone Dost thou use to write thy name? or hast thou a mark to thyself, like an honest, plain-dealing man?

Clerk Sir, I thank God I have been so well brought up that I can write my name

All He hath confessed away with him, he's a villain and a traitor

Cade Away with him, I say, hang him with his pen and inkhorn about his neck"

In an article on the character of Jack Cade, in the "Papers of the Shakespeare Society,"² the writer—in reference to the clerk's name, "Emmanuel," and *Dick's* remark therupon, that "they use to write it on the top of letters"—observes, "The commentators appear to me to have taken unnecessary pains to explain this passage Is it not merely a play upon the word *manual*, or *sign manual*, to this day written at

¹ Part II, act iv, sc 2

² Vol. III, p. 49

the top of King’s or Queen’s letters?” Now *at the top* of the extracts from the town accounts for 1578 and 1594, we find the name “*Emmanuel*” actually written as well as on many others of the rolls and also *at the top of many letters* of the period to be found amongst the Hall papers. Sometimes the name “*Jesus*” is written in lieu of “*Emmanuel*.” Our local records thus afford positive proof that Shakespeare was in this, as in many other instances, plainly referring to a well-known usage at the period when he wrote, but which has since become obsolete and forgotten, and that no far-fetched explanation of the commentators (as in its supposed derivation above quoted) is needed in place of the contemporary proof of existence of the custom in his day.

Other Shakespearian allusions will be found illustrated among the extracts and the notes thereon, as the “*Gossips’ Feast*,” the term “*Harefinder*,” “*Shovel-board*,” &c, but which our limits will not permit us further to notice here.

Notwithstanding the strong Puritan party among the rulers and inhabitants of the town, it is evident that the accession of James I and his warm personal patronage of the stage,¹ as well as of many of the ruder pastimes of the people, had given a greater impetus to theatrical amusements here, as well as in other parts of the kingdom—for, whatever fashion may be set at court will always be followed—as is evinced by the greatly increased number of payments to com-

¹ Mr Peter Cunningham, in the Introduction to his “*Extracts from the Revells Accounts*” (p. xxxiv), states that “the new King saw *five times as many plays* in a year as Queen Elizabeth was accustomed to see.”

panies of players recorded in the town accounts in succeeding years

The chief of these companies were those of the King (of which Shakespeare was a member), the Queen, Prince Henry, and the Princess Elizabeth (afterwards the celebrated and unfortunate Queen of Bohemia—the fascinating “Queen of Hearts”—who was so greatly beloved by the English people¹), and, in addition, those of numerous noblemen of the period

Although under the influence of this court patronage of the stage, the more liberal-minded party in the corporation were strengthened in their support of popular amusements, the Puritan members of that body still seem to have manifested an active opposition to them whenever they had the opportunity of so doing, for in many instances these companies of players had a “gratuity” given to them, and were not suffered to perform. This course of proceeding is especially marked in the year 1622, when, as we have already noticed, a great number of Puritan preachers came to the town, and had wine presented to them at the public expense after the “exercises” at church, when we may readily believe that the King’s “Book of Sports,”² then recently put forth,

¹ It was upon this unhappy lady that Sir Henry Wotton, her attached servant, composed his well known lines, “You meaner beauties of the night.” She visited Leicester on several occasions in her earlier days.

² It was on the 24th of May, 1618, that the King put forth his celebrated declaration “concerning lawful sports to be used upon Sundays, after evening prayers ended, and upon holidays.” It allowed dancing by both sexes, archery, leaping, vaulting, “or any such harmless recreation,” but prohibited what are

came in for a full share of reprobation from these bigotted fanatics—the “Gospel Trumpeter” sounding against it with the true orthodox nasal twang!

The Queen’s players were here on many occasions, and under the years 1605 and 1609 we have some curious entries, showing that they had done considerable damage in the Town Hall by breaking the (Mayor’s) chain in the parlour and many of the glass and latticed windows in the hall. These are the only entries of the kind which we have met with in our local records. Could this damage have been done during some disturbances between these players and the Puritans? This was the company previously known as the “Earl of Worcester’s Servants,” with which Edward Alleyn was connected, and which, as we have seen, had a quarrel in 1583 with the Mayor and the company patronized by the Master of the Revels.

Some ten years after the last of these entries we begin to have the names of the “leaders,” or, as we should now term them, the “managers” of the companies occasionally mentioned in the accounts.

Thus, in 1619 payments were made to “Swynner-ton” and “Terry” and their respective companies, the latter having “large authoritie,” “John Daniell” was here in 1624 with his company of juvenile actors,

termed “unlawful games” on Sundays, such as bull and bear-baitings, interludes, and bowling. Charles I, chiefly, it is said, at the instigation of Archbishop Laud, was injudicious enough to “ratify and publish” this declaration in October, 1633, to the great offence, not only of the Puritans, but of many of the moderate party in the kingdom. The House of Commons, on the 5th of May, 1643, passed a resolution ordering the King’s “Book of Sports” to be burned by the common hangman.

called "The Children of Bristol," and also "Mr Townesend and his fellows, being the Lady Elizabeth her players," in the next year "Slator and his company, being the King's players" were rewarded, whilst in the following account is an entry containing the names of "Ellis Geste, Thomas Swinnerton, Arthur Grimes, and others," who are recorded as "going about with a patent from the Master of the Revels."

In 1628 the three companies under "Swinnerton," "Knight," and "Mr Kite" visited the town, and in the ensuing year those of "Mr Moore" (now at the head of "the Lady Elizabeth her players"), "Mr Guest" and "Dishley," and at the same period we learn that "Mr ffenner,¹ the *King's Poet*," was paid a gratuity of $3s\ 4d$ to pass the town without playing. The last name recorded is that of "Mr Perrie, a player," and his company, in 1633. From this period the payments to players gradually decrease, and finally disappear after the outbreak of the great Civil War, when the Puritans rigidly prohibited all kinds of plays, and the theatres in London were closed for thirteen years, whilst the actors who occasionally attempted to perform in the provinces were frequently taken into custody, and whipped as rogues and vagabonds, as we learn from Whitelocke's "Memorials."

With the Restoration the drama reappeared, and exhibited a licentiousness (truly reflecting the fashionable life of the period) hardly equalled by that of any other Christian nation, but, as no further entries

¹ Some particulars respecting this individual, as well as the other persons above-mentioned, will be found in the Appendix

relating to it occur in our local records, we have here finally to take our leave of it, after tracing it from its rise in the ancient mysteries and miracle plays, through the effulgence of its meridian splendour in the days of Shakespeare, to its temporary eclipse under the cold shadow of a life depressing Puritanism, and so—in the words of “Sweet Willie” himself—

“Farewell, my masters [of the stage], farewell !”

Turning from the stage, we have now to notice the entries in our records relating to waits and minstrels, or musicians, the exhibitors of “Motions,” or puppet plays, tumblers, mountebanks, &c

Any attempt to trace here the general history of the ancient English minstrels would far exceed the space at our disposal. Suffice it to say, that from the earliest period of our annals the professor of the sister arts of music and song was—like the herald—looked upon almost as a sacred character, was everywhere received as an honoured guest, and was privileged to pass without personal danger into a hostile camp in times of war, that amongst the Anglo-Saxons,

“Many a carol old and saintly
Sang the minstrels and the waits,”—

whilst many a tale, far from saintly, “of love and war, romance and knightly worth,” was chanted to their harps by wandering gleemen, who travelled from place to place wherever any festivities were going on—and in the days of our jovial forefathers, with “their eyes of azure and their locks of brown,” where was not feasting going on?—and that from the Saxon times down to the Shakespearian age—nay, even to that of the Protectorate—companies of min-

strels or musicians (for the terms at length were used as synonymous) were retained at the court of the monarch, and in the households of the great nobles, and of many of the wealthy gentry of the country

Most of the corporate towns also had their companies of minstrels, termed *waits*, who were originally musical watchmen (the name being probably derived from the old German *wacht*, a vigil or watching—Gothice *Wahts*¹), and who, at a remote period in this country as well as in Germany, from whence the custom came, sang the hour of night, and in rude rhymes warned the town against fire

The national instrument was undoubtedly the harp, but the hautboy, in all probability from being the pipe upon which these musicians usually played, was —like the performers upon it—called a “waight”² Another kind of pipe, of which the modern flagelet (or flageolet as it is now written) is the diminutive, was also in use among the early waits, as appears from the following passage in the old lay of “Richard Cœur de Lion”—

“A wayte ther com in a kernel [*battlement*]
And a pypyd a moot in a flagel”³

Minstrels were very popular in the reign of Edward II, and they were so richly dressed by their patrons, that a poem of the period, printed by the Percy Society (No 82, p 23), complains—

“That no man may knowe
A mynstrel from a knyg[h]t
Well ny”

¹ Soane’s “New Curiosities of Literature,” vol 11, p 252

² Chappell’s ‘Popular Music of the Olden Time,’ p 547

³ Quoted by Sandys, in his “Christmastide,” p 83

Stow relates an incident which occurred at the court of Edward II in 1316, which shows how great was the popularity of the minstrels, and the privileges which they enjoyed at that time. The King was seated at table in Westminster Hall, solemnizing the feast of Pentecost, and attended by the peers of the realm, when a woman dressed in the habit of a minstrel, riding on a great horse trapped in the minstrel fashion, entered the hall, and, after acting the part of a minstrel for some time, mounted the steps to the royal table, where she deposited a letter (which, on inspection, proved to be a remonstrance to the King on the favours heaped by him on his minions), and then, saluting all the company, she departed. The door keepers being summoned and threatened for having admitted her, readily replied, "That it never was the custom of the King's palace to deny admission to minstrels, especially on such high solemnities and feast days," and which appears to have been deemed a valid excuse for the occurrence.

Proceeding, however, from the history of minstrelsy in general to its more immediate connection with our own town, we find that in the same reign the famous Earl of Lancaster and Leicester—a prince of the blood, who, after his decapitation, was canonized by the people as "St Thomas of Lancaster, and who kept up his household in almost regal state—was a great patron of minstrels. This we learn from the account of his cofferer, Henry of Leicester, for the year ending at Michaelmas, 1314, as quoted by Stow, in his "Survey"¹. Among the entries of knights and others of the household for whom "cloths" for "the

¹ Edited by Thoms (8vo 1842), p 32

Earl's livelees" were provided, his *minstrels* are included, and numerous gifts were presented to knights of Fiance, esquires, *minstrels*, and others

On the 4th of August, 1318, the King (as Henry of Knighton informs us) visited his powerful and rebellious cousin at his Castle of Leicester, on occasion of the temporary reconciliation which had been effected between them by the Papal Legates, who had been specially sent from Rome for the purpose, when the Earl, at the head of 18,000 men, met the King and Queen on their way and escorted them into Leicester

Thomas of Lancaster, forgetting for a time his restless ambition and causes of offence, played the courteous host, and for several days held high festival in honour of his royal guests

The apparently happy, but short-lived family reunion, which this visit was intended to cement, doubtless formed a prominent theme in many of the lays chanted to their harps by the attendant minstrels in the castle hall (still standing),

"Where throngs of knights and barons bold
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize"

Our next Earl, Henry of Lancaster, also had a company of minstrels in his household at Leicester, where he was frequently visited by Edward III, and in the ninth year of whose reign, Queen Philippa coming to the town on her way to the King in Scotland, the officers of her household were presented with money by the Mayor and corporation, according to custom, when among other entries are recorded

“Gifts to the *minstrels* and *trumpeters* of the King and Earl of Lancaster,” &c

The roll of the 18th Edward III records that “*Hugh the trumpeter*” was admitted as a freeman of the borough into the Merchants’ Guild, and paid a florin of gold as his fine, but the whole of which was finally remitted at the instance of the Earl of Derby, son and subsequently the successor of Henry of Lancaster.

But of all our Earls the greatest patron of the minstrel’s art was undoubtedly John of Gaunt, the friend, and kinsman by marriage, of the poet Chaucer, who was himself, evidently, a lover of music, from the delight he has in describing so many of the pilgrims and other personages in his tales as proficients in the science.

All our Earls had resided, more or less frequently, at their Castle of Leicester, but both John of Gaunt and his father-in-law, Henry, “the Good Duke” of Lancaster (who died and was buried within its precincts), had made it their favourite abode, and kept up in it their company of minstrels, as had been done as early as 1308 by Earl Thomas.¹

After the death, however, of John of Gaunt’s first wife, the Lady Blanche, and his marriage to the Princess Constance (in whose right he assumed the title of King of Castile and Leon), giving that lady the choice of all his castles as her future residence, she selected Tutbury (which the Duke had recently restored), and thus, for a time, that castle became their chief establishment, to the neglect of Leicester, and there the newly-wedded pair held a splendid and

¹ Lansdown MSS., No. 1

truly regal court Sir Oswald Mosley, in his "History of the Castle, Priory and Town of Tutbury,"¹ after describing the attention and respect paid to minstrels in those days, says—"Many such bards had from time to time found a welcome asylum under the hospitable roof of the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster, but now that a royal court had been established at Tutbury, under the directions of the Queen, who was passionately fond of the science, and had improved the prevailing taste by the introduction of singers from her own nation, their number became so great, as to render necessary some regulations for the purpose of preserving order amongst them."

With this intent John of Gaunt, in the 4th Richard II (1381), founded, by charter, his famous *Court of Minstrels*, presided over by an officer termed the "King of the Minstrels," who was to be elected annually from among them, and which, like a court-leet, or court baron, had a legal jurisdiction, with full power to receive suit and service from all the minstrels and musicians dwelling within the Honour of Tutbury, in any of the counties of Stafford, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, or Warwick, to determine their controversies and enact laws, also to apprehend and arrest such of them as should refuse to appear at the said court, annually held on the 16th of August. The king and stewards of the court were every year elected with great ceremony.

The Honour of Leicester being one of the foremost in the kingdom, and quite independent of that of Tutbury, it seems very doubtful whether the minstrels dwelling here, and at other places within its

¹ Page 76

limits, were subject to the control of the court at Tutbury. Be this, however, as it might, we find that John of Gaunt and his Duchess were residing at Leicester in August, 1390, when they royally entertained Richard II and his Queen for several days, with costly banquets, minstrelsy, and hunting in the forest, and from this time the castle appears once more to have become their principal residence, for the Duchess was residing here at the time of her decease in 1393.

With Henry IV's accession to the crown the Castle of Leicester (whilst it became a royal castle, as it is at the present day), of course, ceased to be the residence of the head of the house of Lancaster, and although royal visits were occasionally paid to it, and Parliaments held in it, its former glory had departed, its troops of retainers were broken up, and the strains of minstrels were no more heard daily, as of yore, in its deserted halls.

An interesting "Account of Leicester Castle," from the pen of our local historian, Mr James Thompson, was published in the year 1859, from which work, by that gentleman's kind permission, the accompanying plate of the interior of the Hall of the Castle is taken "A building which," as Mr Thompson truly remarks, "is a monument of national interest, being probably the oldest and the only pure example existing in England of the Hall of a Norman Baron, and for these reasons second in antiquarian value only to Westminster Hall." This once noble Hall, rich in its associations of royal festivities and assemblies of the Parliaments of the realm, is now divided and converted into Assize Courts. The Castle is still held for the Crown by a Constable appointed by

patent under the Duchy Seal, Lord Berners being the present Constable

Many corporate towns possessed their bands of minstrels or "waits" at an early period, and patronised as music had been by one powerful lord of the castle after another for several generations, we may feel assured that the town of Leicester was not one of the last to adopt the custom, although we have no record of the period when these musical retainers were first appointed by our civic authorities

It is clear, as has been pointed out by Mr James Thompson, in his "History of Leicester,"¹ that the town waits, like the tailors, butchers, shoemakers, and other tradesmen, were united in a company, and were governed by their own rules

We have seen that as early as 1314, "Hugh the Trumpeter," a retainer of the Earl of Lancaster, was made free of the Merchants' Guild, and a few other examples of the practice will be found among the extracts in the body of the work. Thus, in 1481, we have the name of Henry Howman in the list, who is described as *a harper*, and Mr Chappell, in his "Popular Music of the Olden Time,"² informs us that at this time every great family had its establishment of musicians, among whom the *harper* held a prominent position,³ and that some who were less

¹ Page 264

² Page 44

³ We are told in an "antique song," that—

"Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he,
He call'd for his pipe, and he call'd for his bowl,
And he call'd *for his harpers three*
Ev'ry harper had a fine harp,
And a very fine harp had he "

wealthy retained a harper only. He adds, that *a gown* seems to have been the distinguishing feature of a harper's dress. In 1499 Thomas Wylkyns, "Wayte," was admitted into the guild, and under the year 1612 the name of Thomas Pollard, *musician*, appears (who was subsequently the leader of the town waits), whilst in the list for 1579 is an entry strikingly illustrative of the popularity and general practice of music at the period, and which shows that our town possessed, whilst its population was little more than that of a good sized modern village, what it cannot now boast of, with its 70,000 inhabitants—a resident maker of musical instruments.

The entry records the admission into the guild of Andrew Marsam, *virginal maker*.

Queen Elizabeth, as is well known, was celebrated for her performance on the virginals, which, says Mr Chappell,¹ resembled in shape the "square" piano-forte of the present day (of which it was the precursor), as the harpsichord did the "grand," and was probably so called because chiefly played upon by young girls. In the Shakespearian age the virginals stood in the corner of every barber's shop, whilst the lute, the cittern, and the gittern (or guitar), hung from the walls for the use and amusement of customers.

Shakespeare speaks of "virginaling upon his palm,"² and Ben Jonson says, "I can compare him to nothing more happily than a *barber's virginals*, for every man may play upon him,"³ whilst many other allusions to the instrument are to be met with in the works of contemporary writers, and even after the Restoration

¹ "Popular Music of the Olden Time," p 103

² "Winter's Tale," act 1, sc 2

³ "Every Man in his Humour," act iii, sc 2

Pepys' account of the Great Fire of London, of which he was an eye-witness, mentions the great number of virginals then in use, showing that the Puritans had not been able to put down the practice of music to any great extent

As before remarked, we have no record of the time when a company of waits was first established by the corporation, for although the Borough MSS commence as early as the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion, there is, unfortunately, a considerable hiatus in them during the Wars of the Roses—the first of the series of Hall books containing the minutes of the proceedings of the corporation, only commencing with the year 1478, from which time they are complete down to the present day

The first mention we find of the town waits as a body is in the Chamberlains' account for the year 1524, when "liveries" were provided for them at a cost of 16*s*, from which time entries respecting them are of almost annual recurrence down to the time of the siege of Leicester in 1645, when they disappear until after the Restoration

Originally, and for a considerable period, their number was limited to three, by 1668, however, they had increased to five, and a sixth was afterwards added, of which number the company continued to consist down to its final extinction in the year 1836

After a time, however, each of the three waits had a "boy" under him—possibly as an apprentice to the art of music. The waits were each provided, sometimes annually, at other times biennially, with a scarlet gown or cloak edged with silver lace, for which, at a later period, gold lace was substituted, and they wore, suspended round their necks by a chain of the

same metal, a silver escutcheon or badge of the arms of the borough—the *cinqefoil*. These badges were delivered to the waits on their appointment, each of whom had to provide two sureties for the safe keeping of the badge and its return to the Mayor, in case of the death or dismissal from office of the wearer, and in addition, it appears from the account for 1577, that the *cinqefoil* was also embroidered on the sleeves of their gowns or coats. The waits' boys, according to an order of Common Hall in 1583, were also provided with gowns, and “scutcheons or *cinqefoils*,” of some material not mentioned, were ordered to be made for them, to be worn with green¹ ribbons or laces about their necks. The first mention we have met with of these silver badges is in the account for 1541, when Thomas Goldsmith was paid 3*s* 4*d* “for mending of the town waits' collars,” showing that they had then been for some time in use.

The chief duties of the waits, in addition to their nocturnal services, were to play in the town every morning and evening throughout the year for the gratification of the inhabitants, and to attend upon the Mayor on all state occasions, as proclaiming the May-day and other fairs, &c., and at the Mayor's feast they occupied “the minstrels' gallery,”—which (according to ancient precedent²) is still to be seen at the lower end of the Guildhall opposite the dais—

¹ Scarlet and green were the town colours—the livery formerly worn by the town servants was a *scarlet* coat, or tunic, lined with *green*, the field of the arms of the borough being *gules*. Since 1836 a brown livery has been adopted, which is not in accordance with heraldic usage.

² See “Domestic Architecture in the Middle Ages,” fourteenth century, p. 43.

and there, according to the custom of the time, they struck up merrily as the attendants carried the dishes into the hall

In the old poem of "Richard Cœur de Lion" we are told, that

"Fro kechene cam the fyrist cours
With pipes, and trumpes, and tabours,"

and, again, we are told in the Cotton MS., "Caligula," A 11, fo 9 b, that the "Waytes blewe up to mete" Ned Ward, in his "London Spy" (of which the third edition, here quoted, was published in 1706), gives an amusing account of the city waits, which might also serve in some respects as a description of our own. After speaking in very disparaging terms of their musical performance in the streets on winter nights, at which, he tells us, his friend laughed at him "Why, what," says he, "don't you love music? these are the topping tooters of the town, *and have gowns, silver chains, and salaries* for playing 'Lilla Bullera' to my Lord Mayor's horse through the city" "Mariy, said I, if his horse liked their music no better than I do, he would soon fling his rider for hiring such bugbears to affront his amblieship. For my part, when you told me they were *waits*, I thought they had been the Polanders, and was never so afraid, but that their bears had been dancing behind them"¹

For a considerable time the town waits, although they received an occasional gratuity, had no regular wages paid to them by the corporation, but seem to have been chiefly dependent on the voluntary contri-

butions of the inhabitants, and the remuneration for their attendance at weddings. Their receipts from these sources probably being found to be very irregular and inadequate, an order was made at a Common Hall in 1581, which after restricting the rewards to be given to players and others (as already quoted), provided that every "inhabiter" or housekeeper in Leicester, being of reasonable ability, should be taxed, at the discretion of Mr Mayor, what they should give quarterly to the waits towards the amendment of their living, and in consideration whereof the waits were to "keep the town," and to play every night and morning orderly, both winter and summer, and not to go forth of the town to play, except to fairs and weddings, and then only by the licence of the Mayor, also that no "estraungers," viz., "waits, minstrels, or other musicians," should be suffered to play within the town, neither at weddings, nor fair times, nor any other times whatsoever.

On the 22nd of February in the following year, it was further agreed at a Common Hall that the members of the corporation should personally contribute towards the waits' wages, the company of the Twenty-four paying 12*d* a quarter, and the Forty-eight 6*d* a quarter, whilst the inhabitants generally were to be taxed quarterly, at the discretion of the Mayor, as before provided.

In those days even the elementary principles of free trade were not understood—most certainly free trade in music was not allowed, but, on the contrary, "protection to native industry" was enforced in its most restricted sense, for this order of the Common Hall went on to affirm that no strangers, being musicians or waits, or other persons whatsoever, being

either musicians or players, *although they do or shall dwell within the town of Leicester, and be not of the company of the town waits*, shall be suffered to play within the town, at any time in the year, “at or in a man’s house, door, window, or at any weddings or bride-houses, the time of the general assizes only excepted, and then to play but only to strangers, provided always that the town waits shall keep the town, and both evening and morning continually and orderly at reasonable and seasonable times”

In the summer of 1583, from some cause, the waits had been dismissed from their office, and on the 19th of that month it was agreed by those present at a meeting of the corporation, that the musicians, Mr Griffin’s servants, should be admitted and appointed the town waits, with such wages or salaries as their predecessors had had. At the same time, the three collars were ordered to be delivered to them, each of them finding two townsmen as pledges for their collars, and whose names are appended to the foot of the record—George Ridgley being the leader of the waits, and Thomas Poynor the second, the third wait not being then appointed

Ridgley and Poynor continued in office as town waits for nearly twenty years, but however proficient they might be in the art of music, they were not always in harmony with each other, for a serious quarrel occurred between them in 1601, which ultimately led to their dismissal. On the 21st of November in that year, during a sitting of the corporation, Poynor sent in to the Mayor a letter, or memorial, proposing terms for an agreement between himself and his colleague Ridgley

The writing and orthography of this document

(which is now before me) are so bad that it is almost impossible to decipher it Poynor, however, lets their worships understand that he is willing to fulfil all their minds, and to put up with all the injuries he had received from Ridgley, and this one also, hoping it will be the last. He then proposes terms to Ridgley "in this sort according to his one part," that his (Ridgley's) son shall play the base, and his father (Ridgley himself) his old part, the treble "and the first boy to play one quarter his [part], and the next mine as long" He then proposes that whichever should thereafter be absent from his duty without reasonable cause, having had sufficient notice, should lose his place He concludes by entreating "those that are here in presence to be witness at this agreement," hoping it will content them On the following day, Sunday, the 22nd of November, we have a memorandum under the hand of "William Rowes, Mayor," stating that "if George Ridgeley subscribe likewise to this agreement, then I will that they continue their places as our waits, and that this agreement be entered as an order of the last Common Hall, if not, that they presently yield their collars to my deputy" Ridgley did sign the agreement penned by Poynor, but it was not of long continuance, for we have the following entry in the Hall book on St Matthew's day, 1602, "The waits, because they cannot agree together, are therefore now dismissed from being the town waits from henceforth"

It seems probable that the second member of the company wanted "to play the first fiddle," for Poynor was entirely discarded by the corporation, by whom, on the following 28th of January, it was agreed

“ that George Ridgley and his company (being five in the whole) be from henceforth, upon his good behaviour, admitted the town waits, having a lawful and sufficient company, skilful in the knowledge and art of music, and shall have for their wages quarterly of the Twenty-four 6*d* a piece, and of the Forty-eight 3*d* a piece, and of the other inhabitants and commoners what they in kindness and goodwill give him and his said company ”

In 1627, Thomas Pollard, who was made free of the Guild in 1612, appears to have been the leader of the town waits, and the name of “ Robert Rowe, musician,” appears as occupying the same position in 1670. In the following year these sons of harmony, being again at discord among themselves, were once more dismissed from their office, and the waits of Northampton were remunerated “ for playing on Easter Monday and at May-day fair,” in their stead.

A company of waits was soon afterwards re-appointed, and received *collectively* a salary of £5 per annum and their cloaks and liveries, which in 1524 cost only 16*s* in 1677 cost £10 17*s* 8*d*

The corporation continued to retain a company of waits in their service down to the passing of the “ Municipal Corporations’ Reform Act ” in 1835, the six musicians of whom it was composed receiving an annual salary of £5 each per annum, together with their scarlet cloaks, trimmed with gold lace, as of yore. On the new corporation coming into office in 1836, however, all this was changed, for the town council having resolved that “ the true dignity of the mayoralty does not consist in antiquated pageantry,” proceeded to abolish all such offices which, like those of the mace-bearers, town waits and others, were in

their estimation of this character. At the same time, whilst sweeping away all the ancient pageantry and symbols of authority connected with their body, the town council proceeded to sell by public auction, not only the town plate and other property of similar character, which, under the old *régime*, had been used for feasting at the public expense, but also the five maces and other ancient reliques—a manifestation of zeal in the cause of reform which, however excusable it may have been in the heat of the moment and under the peculiar circumstances of the time, is greatly to be regretted.

Among other things, the *three* silver badges of the waits were sold (for it appears that although there were six waits, this number of *silver* badges had never been exceeded), and, as a catalogue of the sale is now rarely to be met with, it may be worth recording that the musical instruments for the use of the waits consisted of two horns, two clarionets, four piccoloes and a bassoon. One of the silver badges, with its chain, is now in the Collection of Antiquities in the Town Museum.

Passing on to another subject, we find in the account for 1619 an entry of a payment “to players who showed *Etalon Motion*,” and in 1625 a gratuity was given “to a man and a woman that were at Couldwell’s playing with puppets.” The species of drama here referred to—which was usually termed a droll, a motion, or a puppet-play, and which consisted of a company of wooden actors moved by wires, with the assistance of speeches made for them behind the scenes—was, we believe, the origin of our modern “Punch.” Puppet-shows are of great antiquity, and

¹ The earliest notice yet discovered of the popularity of that

we learn that they were common amongst the Greeks, from whom the Romans received them. They are mentioned by Xenophon, Galen, Aristotle (who speaks of some which moved their heads, eyes, hands, and limbs in a very natural manner), Gellius, Horace, and others. It is not known at what period they were first performed in England, but it was prior to 1517, and we are informed that in the times of the Papacy the priests at Witney, in Oxfordshire, annually exhibited a show of the Resurrection, &c., by garnishing out certain small puppets representing the persons of Christ, Mary, and others, and Lambarde, writing towards the close of the sixteenth century, relates that when a child, he saw a like puppet-show in St Paul's Cathedral, London, where the descent of the Holy Ghost was performed, and he adds that "they everywhere used the like *dumb-shows* to furnish sundry parts of the Church Service with spectacles of the nativity, passion, and ascension." Cervantes has made Don Quixote the spectator of a puppet-show, and the knight's behaviour on the occasion is described with great humour.

It appears that in London during the Civil War, whilst the Puritans closed the theatres, they did not discountenance puppet-plays, for in "The Actors' Remonstrance," which came out in 1643, complaint is made of the allowance of bear-baiting and puppet-shows, while regular dramatic performances were forbidden. The Puritan party in the country did not, however, at an earlier period, display the same spirit towards these performances, for at the Michaelmas

hero and his wife in England is in a MS. Diary of the year 1660. See Dr Kimbault's "Little Book of Songs and Ballads," p. 162, note.

Sessions at Bridport in 1630 a charge was made "that William Sands the elder, John Sands, and William Sands the younger, and about nine others, wander up and down the country with certain blasphemous shows and sights, which they exercise by way of *puppet-playing*, and are now, as the constables of Beaminster and other inhabitants state, come to that town, and have set up their shows of puppet-playing and feats not only in the day-time, but late in the night, to the great disturbance of the townsmen there" The Puritan preacher of Beaminster having assailed Sands and his show in the Sunday's sermon, was pursued from the church to his house by Sands and two of his company, who entered after him, and "there challenged him for his sermon, and gave him threatening speeches" The people generally seem to have favoured the showmen, but the magistrates ordered Sands to remove on the following Monday, and to depart out of the county, under penalty of being committed to the next assizes¹ These performances were at length superseded by the revival of pantomimes, which were first performed by grotesque characters in England at Drury Lane Theatre in 1702 The puppets, however, continued to be in great vogue for some years longer, for in March, 1711, we find in the "Spectator" a letter ostensibly written by the Under-sexton of St Paul's, Covent Garden, setting forth that for twenty years he had performed his office of tolling in to prayers to his great satisfaction until the last fortnight, during which he had found his congregation take the warning of his bell, morning and evening, *to go to a*

¹ See proceedings quoted in Roberts's "Social Life of the Southern Counties," p 42

puppet-show, set forth by one Powell under the Piazzas, that he had placed his son at the Piazzas to acquaint the ladies that the bell rang for church, and that it stood on the other side of the garden, but they only laughed at the child, and that, as things were, Mr Powell had a full congregation, whilst they had a very thin house—merely a few ordinary people, who came to church *only to say their prayers* This Powell was a very noted man in his way A curious work, now before me, printed in 1715, and entitled “A Second Tale of a Tub, or the History of Robert Powel, the Puppet-Show-Man” (but which was really written as a satire against Sir Robert Walpole and his political puppets), has a frontispiece representing the puppet-stage with the showman in front of it, the head of Sir Robert Walpole being placed on the humpbacked figure of Powel Nor was Sir Robert the only one who was made to suffer this semi-transformation, for his royal master, William III, underwent the same process, although in a complimentary instead of a satirical manner

Tonson, the bookseller, in bringing out the folio illustrated edition of Dryden’s “Virgil,” intending to compliment “the Delverer,” represented Æneas with the head of William of Nassau, which politic manœuvre of Tonson’s gave rise to the following epigram —

“Old Jacob, by deep judgment sway’d,
To please the wise beholders,
Has placed old Nassau’s hook-nosed head
On young Æneas’ shoulders

To make the parallel hold tack,
Methinks there’s little lacking,
One took his father pick-a back,
And t’other sent his packing”

To return, however, to Powell. In the dedication to the "Lady Majority," the writer exclaims, "What man, woman, or child, that lives within the veige of Covent Garden, or what Beau or Belle visitant at the Bath, knows not Mr Powel? Have not England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, have not even the Oicades, the utmost limits of Cæsar's conquests, been filled with the fame of Mr Powel's mechanical achievements? The Dutch, the most expert nation in the world for puppet shows, must now confess themselves shamefully outdone. It would be trifling after this to recount to you, how Mr Powel has melted a whole audience into pity and tears—but I shall no longer harangue to prove that the sun shines." Again, he describes his hero as "the great, the illustrious, and the celebrated Mr Powel, the puppet-showman, who has worthily acquired the reputation of one of the most dexterous managers of human mechanism, no English artist ever coming in vie with him—his wires are perfectly invisible, his puppets are well jointed, and very apt to follow the motions of his directing hand." It will readily be seen how applicable these qualities of the ostensible hero of the tale were to the great "motion master" of the political stage, who held, from his own extensive experience, that "every man has his price." The last eminent "motion master" was Floeton, whose wooden puppets were very popular at Bartholomew fair as late as 1790. It may be added, that much curious and interesting information on the subject will be found in "A Paper on Puppets," by Dr Doran, in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for February, 1852, and also in the "Histoire des Marionettes," by M Charles Magnin, in successive numbers of the

“*Revue des Deux Mondes*,” for 1850 Mr Morley’s entertaining “*Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*” may also be consulted

From a very early period *tumbling* formed one of the most common pastimes of the English people Strutt¹ says that “dancing, tumbling, and balancing, with variety of other exercises requiring skill and agility, were originally included in the performances exhibited by the gleemen and the minstrels, and they remained attached to the profession of the joculator after he was separated from those who only retained the first branches of the minstrel’s art, that is to say, poetry and music” And Mr Wright, in his “*History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England*,”² states that, in the middle ages, “the dinner was always accompanied by music, and itinerant minstrels, mountebanks, and performers of all descriptions were allowed free access to the hall to amuse the guests by their performances These were intermixed with dancing and tumbling, and often with exhibitions of a very gross character, which, however, amid the looseness of mediæval manners, appear to have excited no disgust”

Nor were the feats of tumbling performed by the male sex only, for females also practised them, and both Strutt and Wright have given two illustrations copied from ancient MSS representing Herodias displaying her feats of activity before Herod at the feast given by him, and which the mediæval writers took to be those of a regular wandering jongleur The princess is pictured supporting herself upon her hands with her legs in the air, and, as Mr Wright says,

¹ “*Sports and Pastimes*,” by Hone, p 206 ² Page 166

“performing tricks similar to those exhibited by the modern beggar boys in our streets”¹ In the reign of Queen Elizabeth we read of the “unchaste, shameless, and unnatural tumbling of the Italian women,”² from which it would appear that the practice had then fallen into disuse among us, although we find that it had not done so in the reign of Henry VII, for in the Privy Purse Expenses of that monarch is an entry on the 1st of January, 1504, of a payment of £1 “to litell Mayden the tumbler”

Another favourite amusement was the performance of dancing bears, horses, monkeys, and other animals, many illustrations of which are given by Strutt. The earliest entry which we find in our local records in connection with these amusements is in 1548, when there was “paid to my lord marquis’ servant *with the dancing horse*, 3s 4d,” the nobleman referred to being the Marquis of Dorset, afterwards Duke of Suffolk, the father of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey, and to whom, at the period, the corporation of Leicester looked up as their patron, and to whose players and bearward presents were frequently given. In Shakespeare’s time there were several celebrated learned quadrupeds, as “Holden’s camel,” which, says Taylor, the Water Poet, was distinguished for “ingenious study,” a superlatively wise elephant noticed by Donne and Ben Jonson, but, above all, the “dancing horse”—“Bankes’ horse”—which has been celebrated by several contemporary writers. Shakespeare refers to it in “Love’s Labour’s Lost,”³ when he makes *Moth* say, “The *dancing horse* will

¹ “Domestic Manners,” p. 167

² See “Archæologia,” for 1855

³ Act 1, sc. 2

tell you ” The fate of poor Bankes and his horse Morocco was a sad one, for, on visiting the Continent the horse and his master were brought under suspicion of magic, at Orleans, and although Bankes explained the manner in which the tricks were performed and undertook to teach any horse the same tricks in a twelve-month, he and his horse were eventually burned at Rome as magicians, to the lasting disgrace of that age of ignorance and intolerance ¹

We have a similar exhibition referred to in a ballad on “ The New Humours of Bartholmew Fair,” written before 1687, which thus commences—

“ Here are the rarities of the whole Fair,
Pimper-le-Pimp, and the wise *Dancing Mare*,
Here’s valiant *St George and the Dragon, a farce* ”²

The earliest notice we have of the visits of companies of tumblers to the town is in 1590, when the then large sum of 28*s 4d*, in addition to what was gathered, was “ given to certain players, playing upon ropes at the Cross Keys ”

At this period not only had the nobility their companies of players and musicians, or minstrels, but owing to the great popularity of such displays of skill many of them also retained a company of tumblers

Henry VII was frequently entertained with these performances, many entries of rewards to tumblers occurring in his Privy Purse Expenses,³ and it would

¹ Douce’s “ Illustrations of Shakespeare ” (pp 131-2), contains several curious and interesting particulars respecting Bankes and his wonderful horse, as does also Collier’s “ Poetical Decameron ” (vol 1, pp 160-167), where it is stated, on the authority of “ Peel’s Jests,” that the horse could even play upon the lute

² Dr Rimbault’s “ Little Book of Songs and Ballads,” p 162

³ Printed in the “ Excerpta Historica ”

seem that Queen Elizabeth inherited the tastes of her grandfather for this kind of diversion, for we learn from the Revels Account that "feats of activity and other shews" were performed before the Queen in 1587-8, and in 1588-9 "feats of activity, tumbling, and matakines,"¹ in which "Symmons the tumber exhibited," and it appears that "Symons and his fellows" had also performed before her Majesty in 1584.²

These were probably the same individuals who, under the designation of "the Queen's Tumblers," visited the provinces, and in 1589 received a gratuity of 6*s* 6*d* from the Corporation of Lyme.³

Nor was similar patronage wanting on the part of James I, for we find that in 1622 there came to Leicester "Vincent and his Company *having authority from the King* to show feats of activity," Vincent probably holding the same office under James as Symmons had done under his predecessor.

In this instance the Corporation did not act towards the tumblers with the same liberality as on the former occasion, for a gratuity of 10*s* only was paid to them, the royal "authority" which they held notwithstanding. Reference has been made incidentally to the Dutch, as "the most expert nation in the world for puppet-shows," but if we borrowed anything from them in that respect, we appear to have lent them the services of a very expert tumbler or posture-master, for we learn from the Minutes of the

¹ A dance of fools, see Douce's "Illustrations to Shakespeare," ed 1839, p 578

² Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 257

³ As quoted from the town archives in Roberts's "Social History of the Southern Counties," p 37

Council of Leyden, that in November 1608 the authorities of that city allowed William Pedel, an Englishman, on his petition, "to exhibit various beautiful and chaste performances with his body, without using any words," *within the church of Bagynhoff* within the city, "provided he cease during the preaching of God's word, and that the poor orphans here have half the profits "¹

As a set off, however, against this exportation, we have an importation recorded of a famous Dutch woman, about the year 1689, of whom Grainger says that, "when she first danced and vaulted upon the rope in London, the spectators beheld her with pleasure mixed with pain, as she seemed every moment in danger of breaking her neck" A bill of her performance at Bartholomew Fair, quoted by Dr Rimbault,² mentions her "side-capers, upright-capers, cross-capers, and back-capers on the *tight* rope She walks too on the *slack* rope, which no woman but herself can do" And Ned Ward praises her performance and her modesty, at the same Fair, in his "London Spy "³

After the Restoration, rope-dancing and tumbling were very favourite amusements among all classes of the people One of the most celebrated of the rope dancers and managers of tumbling companies about this time was Jacob Hall, of whom an account is given in Grainger's "Biographical History "

In the account for the year 1670 we meet with the first notice of that class of vagrant stage-performers,

¹ See "Notes and Queries," vol vii (1853), p 114

² Ibid vol viii (1859), p 161

³ Edit 1706, p 243

the Mountebanks, or itinerant dealers in nostrums and physic, "whose show," says Strutt,¹ "is usually enlivened with mimicry, music, and tumbling" who has "called to his assistance some of the performances practised by the jugglers (*jongleurs*), and the bourdour, or merry-andrew, seems to have been his inseparable companion"

Mr Wright tells us,² that, in the middle ages, the minstrels or *jongleurs*, who formed a very important class of society, "possessed many methods of entertaining, for they joined the profession of *mountebank*, posture-master, and conjurer with that of music and story-telling," and that, consequently, "they were always welcome"

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the mountebank does not appear to have been looked upon with so favourable an eye, for we find Shakespeare several times referring to these "wandering empirics" in very disparaging terms. Thus, in the "Comedy of Errors"³

"They say this town is full of cosenage,
As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguised cheaters, *prating mountebanks*,
And such like libertines of sin"

And again, in the same play,⁴

"They brought one Pinch, a hungry lean-faced villain,
A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
A thread-bare juggler, and a fortune-teller"

The character is also referred to in "Coriolanus," "Othello," and "Hamlet"

¹ "Sports and Pastimes," p 236

² "Domestic Manners," p 165

³ Act 1, sc 2

⁴ Act v, sc 1

The entry in the account is as follows—

“ Paid to y^e Cryer and Beadle for looke-
ing to y^e Conduits, when y^e Moun-
tybancks were in Town ij^s ”

And again, in 1673, the sum of 2s 6d was, by the Mayor's order, paid “ for ale fetched to the Gaynesborow, when the Mountebank Doctor was there ”

In Butler's “ Remains ” is a very graphic sketch of the character of a mountebank, and, among other papers illustrating the tricks by which these impudent impostors gulled the public, the following amusing anecdote is related in the “ Spectator ”¹

“ There is scarcely a city in Great Britain but has one of this tribe who takes it into his protection, and on the market-day harangues the good people of the place with aphorisms and receipts. You may depend upon it he comes not there for his own private interest, but out of a particular affection to the town. I remember one of these public-spirited artists at Hammersmith, who told his audience that he had been born and bred there, and that, having a special regard for the place of his nativity, he was determined to make a present of five shillings to as many as would accept of it. The whole crowd stood agape, and ready to take the doctor at his word, when, putting his hand into a long bag, as every one was expecting his crown-piece, he drew out a handful of little packets, each of which he informed the spectators was constantly sold at five shillings and sixpence, but that he would bate the odd five shillings to every inhabitant of that place. The whole assembly immediately closed with this generous offer, and took off all his

¹ No 572, July 26, 1714

physic, after the doctor had made them vouch for one another, that there were no foreigners among them, but that they were all Hammersmith men!"

But to return to another branch of our subject, which we left incomplete at an earlier period,—namely, the ruder sports of the people—we have next to notice the baiting of bears and bulls by dogs, cock-fighting and other amusements, as horse-racing, the Easter hunting, Whipping-Toms, &c

The barbarous custom of bear-baiting was a favourite sport of our ancestors at an early period. We learn from Fitz-Stephen, that as early as the reign of Henry II the baiting of bears by dogs was a popular game in London, whilst at a later period a royal bearward was an officer regularly attached to the royal household, and among the Harleian MSS¹ is preserved the original warrant of Richard III appointing John Brown to this office, and which recites "the diligent service he had done the king" as the ground for granting him the privilege of wandering about the country with his bears and apes, and receiving the "loving benevolence and favours of the people." This sovereign, as we have before remarked, entertained a company of players, and gave great encouragement to the science of music.

In the "Northumberland Household Book," compiled in the reign of Henry VII, enumerating "al maner of rewardis customable usede yearely to be geven by my Lorde to strangers, as players, mynstrallis, or other strangers whatsomever they be," are the following—"Furst, my Lorde usith and accus-

¹ No 433. The document is given at length in Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 35, note

tomyth to gyff yerely the Kinge or the Queene's barwarde, if they have one, when they custome to com unto hym, yearely

vij^b viij^d

Item, my Lorde usith and accustomyth to gyfe yeily, when his Lordshipe is at home, to his barward when he comyth to my Lorde in Christmas, with his Lordshippe's beests, for makyng of his Lordship pastyme, the said xiij days

xx^s"

Bear-baiting seems to have been a favourite pastime of Queen Elizabeth, as it had been of her sister Mary, and, indeed, it was then considered a fashionable and proper amusement for ladies of the highest rank, and there can be no doubt that they were customary spectators of the baiting of bulls and bears¹

Master Lancham informs us that this was one of the "princely pleasures" provided by the Earl of Leicester for the entertainment of the Queen during her famous visit to Kenilworth Castle, when thirteen great bears were worried by ban dogs, and we find also that foreign ambassadors were on several occasions the invited guests of her Highness at similar exhibitions, who witnessed this cruel and unfeminine sport in her presence with great delight

James I, as might be expected, from his well-known love of hunting and other sports, was also a patron of bear-baiting, and several instances of his warm participation in the sport are recorded in Nichols' "Progresses and Processions" of that monarch. On one occasion the King, accompanied by his Court, took the Queen, the Princess Elizabeth, and the two young Princes, to the Tower to witness a fight between a lion and a bear, and by

¹ Wright's "Domestic Manners," p 304

the King's commandment the bear (which had killed a child that had been negligently left in the bear-house) was afterwards "baited to death upon a stage," in the presence of many spectators¹

Paris-garden was now, as it had been in Elizabeth's reign, the fashionable resort for witnessing these exhibitions. On the 12th July, 1623, Mr Chamberlain wrote thus to Sir Dudley Carleton — "The Spanish Ambassador is much delighted in bear-baiting. He was last week at Paris-garden, where they showed him all the pleasure they could both with bull, bear, and horse, besides jackanapes, and then turned a white bear into the Thames, where the dogs bated him swimming, which was the best sport of all."

Popular as, it will thus be seen, bear-baiting was in the metropolis and at Court, it was not less so in the provinces, and among the people of all classes. In illustration of this fact we have it on record that at Congleton, in Cheshire, "the town bear having died, the Corporation in 1601 gave orders to sell their *Bible* in order to purchase another, which was done, and the town no longer without a bear." How they replaced the *Bible* is not told, but the memory of the event is kept up to the present day in a popular rhyme, for a correspondent of "Notes and Queries," in August 1862, states that a gentleman passing through the town "heard some tailors singing—

"Congleton rare, Congleton rare,
Sold the *Bible* to pay for a bear."

Nor is this the only instance of the kind, for the same

¹ Nichols' "Progresses and Processions," vol. II., p. 259

legend attaches to Clifton, a village near Rugby, in the following couplet—

“ Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, in Warwickshire,
Sold the Church Bible to buy a bear ”¹

And in Eastwood’s “ History of Ecclesfield,”² it is stated of that place “ that ways and means of the usual kind being awanting for the procuration of the usual annual bait at the feast, the churchwardens pawned the *Bible* from the sacred desk in order to obtain the means of enjoying their immemorial sport ! ”

These pastimes, both at Paris-garden and in the country, were, for a long period, ordinarily practised on the sabbath, and at one of these exhibitions at Paris-garden on Sunday, the 13th January, 1583, the scaffolds being crowded with “ an infinite number of people to see the bear-baiting,” suddenly fell down killing eight persons, and seriously crushing about 200 others. In a very rare Roman Catholic book, “ The Life of the Reverend Father Bennet of Canfilde,” Douay, 1623, translated from the French by R R , Catholique Priest,³ we have the following mention of the custom—“ *Even Sunday is a day designed for Beare-bayting, and even the houre of they're (the Protestants) service is allotted to it, and* ” (as a zealous Catholic he adds) “ indeede the tyme is as well spent at the one as at the other ”

In Pulleyne’s “ Etymological Compendium ”⁴ it is stated, that “ this cruel and unmanly amusement is of

¹ “ Notes and Queries,” vol 11 (1862), pp 166, 236, 299

² Page 354

³ Quoted in Sir H. Ellis’s notes to Brand’s “ Popular Antiquities,” ed 1841, vol 11, p 242

⁴ Edited by M A Thoms, p 170

African origin, and was introduced into Europe by the Romans." On the same authority we learn, that the honour, if honour it can be deemed, of its earliest exhibition in this country belongs to Leicestershire, for it is stated that "the first we read of bear-baiting in England was in the reign of King John, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, where "thys stiaynge passtime was introduced by some Italyans for his highness's amusement, wherewith he and his court were highly delighted." We are not informed, however, from what authority this is derived.

At Leicester, as we learn by the account for 1612, there was a "Bear-garden," for which the Corporation received the annual rent of 20*d*.

Numerous payments to bearwards occur in various years, among others, rewards were given to those of Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth, the Marquis of Dorset (afterwards Duke of Suffolk), the Earls of Huntingdon, Derby, Shrewsbury, Leicester, and Essex, and the Lords Clinton and Vaux.

Not satisfied, however, with witnessing the sport at the place set apart for it—the Bear-garden—it seems to have been so thoroughly in accordance with the tastes and feelings of even the rulers of the people as to be introduced at the Mayor's feast, at the Town Hall, which was attended by many of the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood.

We may suppose that, taking the place usually occupied by the "Interlude," the bear was baited in the Hall in the interval between the feast and the "banquet" or dessert, and the company, like the Spanish ambassadors, no doubt witnessed the exhibition "with great delight."

Thus, in 1580, we find it recorded that, in addition

to the contributions gathered from the company present, a reward of 4*s* was given "to two bearwards at Mr Mayor's dinner," and two years later we have the following entry —

" Geven to George Warde, Bearewaide, the
Eile of Huntingdons man, and to one other,
being *Sir Xpofer Hattons* man and a beare-
ward, at Mr Mayor's dynner more than was
gaythered . . . viij^s"

That remarkable man, Sir Christopher Hatton, is well-known as a statesman, and is it not also duly chronicled in "The Critic" that he "was *famous for his dancing?*" but it is not equally well-known that he had a bear-baiting establishment attached to his household

In the summer of 1589 (probably at the invitation of the Mayor), the High Sheriff, Mr Skeffington, and "divers other gentlemen with him," were present at "a greate Bearebeating" in the town, and were entertained, at the public expense, with wine and sugar, and a present of "ten shillings in gold" was also made

In 1603, during the riotous proceedings in the town, consequent on cutting down the May-pole (as before described), among other proclamations brought down by a king's messenger, was one prohibiting all Bear-baiting, Bull-baiting, Interludes, Common-plays, or other like disorderly or unlawful exercises or pastimes, to be kept or used upon any Sabbath-day

In 1606, a payment of 2*s* 6*d* was made by the Chamberlains to "the Master of the Baboons, licensed to travel by the king's warrant"

This entry possesses a considerable amount of interest, from the fact, that it very probably refers to

the celebrated Edward Alleyn, to whom we have more than once before referred, for he held the office of "Keeper of the King's Wild Beasts, and Master of the Royal Bear-garden," situate on the Bank-side in Southwark, for a time jointly with his father-in-law, Henslowe, afterwards alone. The profits he derived from this appointment are said by one of his biographers¹ to have been very large, and to have been the source of the great fortune which he realized, and he is styled by this office—"Master of the Bears and Dogs," in the letters patent for the foundation of his college at Dulwich, in 1620. An incident in connection with him as Master of the Bear-garden is recorded by Stow, in his Chronicle, under the year 1603-4, and which is sufficiently curious to excuse its quotation here. He says—"The Kings Majesty lodging in the Tower of London on the 13th of March being told of the lions, he asked of their being, and how they came thither, for that in England there were bred no such fierce beasts, whereunto was answered that no mention is made in any record of lions breeding here nevertheless Abraham Ortelius, and other forraigne writers, do affirme that there are in Englande beasts of as great courage as the lion, namely the mastiffe dog, whereupon the King caused *Edward Alleyn*, late servant to the Lord Admirall, now sworin the Prince's man, and Master of the Beane Gaiden, to fetch secretly three of the fellest dogs in the garden, which being done, the King, Queen, and Prince, with four or five lords, went to the Lion's towre and caused the lustiest lion to be separated from its mate, and put into the lion's

¹ See Hone's "Table Book," p 495

den one dog alone ” The other dogs were afterwards put in, and the fight is described by the chronicler at some length The end was that “ the two first dogs dyed within a few dayes, but the last dog was well recovered of all his hurts, and the young Prince commanded his servant E Alleyn to bring the dog to him to St James, where the Prince charged the said Alleyn to keepe him, and make much of him, saying, he that had fought with the king of beastes, should never after fight with any inferiour creature ”

The last patent discovered to have been given for the office of “ Master of the Bears and Dogs,” is that granted to Sir Sanders Duncombe in 1639, the practice having been checked by the Parliament in 1642, but the sport was not wholly discontinued in the neighbourhood of London till 1750 The comparison of a noisy house to a “ bear-garden,” still perpetuates the national amusement of the time of Shakespeare

Bull-baiting was an equally popular sport, but we do not meet with a single item of expense connected with it in the town accounts, like the very numerous ones of the pastime of bear-baiting This is readily explained by the very nature of the municipal regulations respecting it, by which provision was made for a regular supply of bulls for baiting, without expense to the town funds This regulation was also made at a period long anterior to any entry of a payment for bear-baiting, for it occurs among the ordinances agreed to at a Common Hall held on “ the Thursday before the feast of Saints Simon and Jude,” 1467, and is as follows —“ The Mayor commandeth on the King’s behalf (*inter alia*) that no butcher kill no bull to sell within this town, but if it be (i.e

without its being) baited before, on pain of forfeiture thereof”

It is asserted, with what truth we know not, that the first bull-bait held in England took place at Stamford about the year 1209, and that it was introduced from the following circumstances —“ Earl Warren, lord of the town, standing upon the walls of the castle, observed two bulls fighting until the butchers’ dogs interposed and pursued one of them through the town, which sight so pleased his lordship, that he gave the meadow where the fray began to the butchers of the town, to be used as a common after the first grass was mown, on condition that they should find a mad bull the day six weeks before Christmas-day for the continuance of the sport for ever ”¹

Our Earl, John of Gaunt, is said to have founded a similar sport in connection with his Court of Minstrels at Tutbury, which is fully described in Plott’s “ History of Staffordshire,” and although it has been attempted to be shown that the “ bull-running ” was an addition of a later date, its institution by John of Gaunt is reasserted by Sir Oswald Mosley in his “ History of Tutbury,”² the belief being that he had adopted it to remind his Spanish consort of the bull-feasts of her native country

But whatever might have been its origin, the popularity of the sport was very great at an early period in our history, and Mr Wright³ informs us that in the middle ages “ there was scarcely a town or village of any magnitude which had not its bull-

¹ See Butcher’s “ Survey of Stamford ” (1717), p 77

² Page 84, note

³ “ Domestic Manners,” p 304

ring," and that, "it was a municipal enactment in all towns and cities that no butcher should be allowed to kill a bull until it had been baited,"¹ as it was with us. It would appear that it was sometimes customary for the baitings to take place before the Mayor's door, for we find by the corporation journals of the City of Winchester, that in the 30th year of the reign of Henry VIII it was ordered—

"That from hensforthe ther shal be no bulstake set before any Mayor's doore to bayte any bull, but onlie at the bull-ringe within the said cytie."

At Southampton it was part of the Mayor's office to see that plenty of bulls and bears were provided for baiting.

In Mission's "Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England"² are some remarks on the manner of bull-baiting as it was practised in the time of William III.

We have no record of any open space in Leicester having been called "the Bull-ring"—a designation still retained at the present day at Birmingham and other towns,—but I have an impression that a locality now in the centre, but which was originally just without the walls of the town, derived its ancient name from its having been used of old as the place for holding these bear and bull-baitings, in addition to, or in lieu of, the Bear-garden—a purpose to which it was well adapted. This is the site immediately without the east gates, now called "the Haymarket"—previously "the Coal-hill," (from its being the place where coal was formerly brought for sale in panniers on the backs of horses)—but formerly known

¹ "Domestic Manners," p. 304

² Pages 24-26

as “the *Bear-hill*” The centre of the spot was once occupied by a stone cross, mentioned in our records as the “Bearehill,” “Barehill,” “Beerehill,” and “Berehyll Crosse,” (in accordance with that delightful and never-enough-to-be-envied freedom from the shackles of orthography which then prevailed), and which, at a later date, became corrupted into “Barwell,” and finally into “Barrell Crosse”

Cock-fighting was another barbarous sport which survived until a comparatively recent period as a public pastime, and as it was one of the last to become obsolete, so it was one of the earliest in its origin, for it is said to have been instituted by law at Athens as an annual sport in the time of Themistocles, in order to commemorate a victory of the Grecian army over the Persians, under circumstances related by the historians

In Cæsar's Commentaries mention is made of the English cocks, but Fitzstephen, who died in 1191, is the earliest writer who notices cock-fighting in England Speaking of the “Sports and Pastimes of Old Time used in this City” (London), he says that “every year at Shrove Tuesday the school-boys do bring cocks of the game to their master, and all the forenoon they delight themselves in cock-fighting after dinner all the youths go into the fields to play at the ball”¹ From this time to almost the end of the last century this diversion, cruel and absurd as it was, continued to be practised, although it was prohibited in the reign of Edward III, again in that of Henry VIII, (who however patronized it himself), and once more in 1569²

¹ Stow's “Survey of London,” by Thoms, p 35

² Maitland's “History of London”

James I, after his accession to the English throne, became a great patron of the sport, both at the royal cock-pit and on his progresses. Mr. Jesse, in his "Court of England under the Stuarts,"¹ says of him, that, "in addition to his taste for hunting, and his addiction to the pleasures of the table, *the cock-pit was frequented by him at least twice a-week*, and indeed constituted one of his principal sources of amusement. It is even affirmed that the salary of the master of the cocks, amounting to two hundred pounds per annum, exceeded the united allowances of two secretaries of state." And we learn from a MS. in the Bodleian Library,² that the King being at Lincoln in 1617, on his Progress, "on Wednesday, being the second of April, his Majesty did come in his caroche to the sign of the George by the Stanbowe (Stone Bow), to see a cockinge thear, where he appointed four cocks to be put on the pit together, *which made his Majestie very merrie*."

It is very probable that James, in the various visits which he paid to Leicester during his reign, witnessed his favourite sport at our cock-pit.

We have met with only three entries in our local records of payments connected with this cruel sport, all of them in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and in every instance for the entertainment of members of the aristocracy residing in the neighbourhood.

The first, in 1572, is for the expense of "three gallons of wine, 3 lbs. of sugar, and cakes given to Sir George Hastings, knight, and divers other knights

¹ Vol. 1, p. 57, ed. 1855

² Quoted in Nichols' "Progresses and Processions of James I," vol. iii., p. 264

and gentlemen at the *cocke pitt*," and the second, which was on the 20th of June, 1586, for a similar entertainment to " Sir George Hastings and divers other Gentlemen at the Cockinge," whilst the last entry, in 1595, is a payment of 2*ls* 4*d* spent in wine and sugar, cherries, cakes, and bread, " given the Gentlemen att the Cockinge, and at the Cockepitt "

The Leicester cock-pit at that period, as appears by Speed's plan of the town taken in 1610, stood on the eastward side of the London road, (now Granby-street) between the present Halford-street and Rutland-street, and was a sexangular building with a domed roof

Cock-fighting was again prohibited in 1654, by one of the acts of Oliver Cromwell, but after his death it once more became fashionable, under the patronage of that leader of all the vices of his age—the worthless scapegrace, Charles II, who, according to the witty Rochester's well-known epitaph, " never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one "

At a more recent period a new cock-pit was erected in Leicester. Our late venerable and versatile fellow-townsman, Mr William Gardiner,¹ in his gossiping and characteristic work, " Music and Friends,"² describing the condition of the town about the year 1780, says —

" Wakes and fairs were continually occurring, in which the lower orders indulged in all sorts of sports, as cock-throwing, foot-ball, and single-stick. The work-people had their clubs, foot-ales, and candle-

¹ Author of " Sacred Melodies," " The Music of Nature," &c

² Vol. III, p. 34

blocks The farmers had their sheep-shearing, May-poles, and harvest-cart In the upper classes dancing and cards prevailed, *but the grand amusement was cock-fighting* The mains to be fought were advertised in every paper, and were as common as cricket-matches at this time Sometimes one hundred cocks were slaughtered in a day The theatre of this amusement, called the cock-pit, stood where now stand the Assembly Rooms Even men of rank and fashion joined in this cruel sport, and, like our Saxon ancestors, hunted all day, and drank all night”



By the kindness of Joseph Harris, Esq., of Westcotes, who possesses the original copper-plate, I am enabled to give an impression of the card of admission to the old cock-pit

Shakespeare, in “Antony and Cleopatra,”¹ al-

¹ Act II, sc. 4

ludes to the similar sport of quail-fighting, but which Mr Douce¹ thinks was not practised in England in Shakespeare's time

We have next to notice the sport of horse-racing. The first reference we have found in the chamberlains' accounts relative to horse-races in Leicester is in the year 1603, when a gallon of sack, with sugar, was "given to the gentlemen at the horse-running"

Although horse-racing was customary in England at a very early period, probably even prior to the Conquest—indeed, it is stated to have been practised here in the time of the Romans,—it is said not to have made any considerable progress, but rather to have become extinct, till the accession of James I, on the 24th of March, 1603, who, it is asserted²—“again introduced it from Scotland, where it came into vogue from the spirit and swiftness of the Spanish horses which had been wrecked in the vessels of the Armada, and thrown ashore on the coasts of Galloway. From this period,” it is added, “it became fashionable”

The foregoing entry in our records shows that a *public race* took place at Leicester in the same year as the King came to the throne, and as the entry precedes one on the 23rd of March (the day previous to the death of Queen Elizabeth), recording the presentation of “wine and sugar and banqueting stuff” to Sir John Grey and other gentlemen at the Angel, in Leicester, coming post from the court, there is sufficient evidence that the sport must have been

¹ “Illustrations of Shakespeare,” ed 1839, p 367

² Nichols’ “Progresses and Processions of James I,” vol 1, p 496, note

established at Leicester as early as in any town in England, if the foregoing assertion be correct

In the autumn of the same year, or it may be in the early part of the following year, for the date is uncertain, Sir Thomas Griffin, Sir William Faunt, and other gentlemen, were entertained at the Angel, with "sacke and claret at the horse-running"

In 1613 we have the first notice of the kind of prize given here to the successful candidate, and which, in most places, was a silver bell (from which originated the phrase "to bear the bell") In this instance the prize was a "golden snaffle," and in the following year, when the races took place on the 18th of April, it was a gold cup

A contribution of £4 was given from the town purse in 1674 towards "the Plates to be run for," and in 1688 the sum of £2 was paid towards buying a plate to be run for in the Abbey Meadow, and a similar sum was contributed for many years after

In 1690 there was "paid to Colonel Lister's man, when he brought the *Earl of Rutland's* Plate to the Mayor, the 30th day of September, which was to be run for in the Abbey Meadow, 5s , " and a further sum of 1s 3d was paid by the Mayor's order for ribbon to tie on the cover

All these extracts tend to show that Leicester must have been one of the foremost amongst those towns where public races were first established, and the last entry proves at what a distant date they received the patronage of the princely house of Rutland—a patronage which continued to within a few years of the decease of the late venerable and universally respected Duke

It will be seen that the original race-ground was

the Abbey Meadow, where, says Throsby,¹ "the horses ran sometimes up to the knees in water" About the year 1740 a portion of St Mary's Field was set apart for the sport, and, on this, as we learn on the same authority, the horses had to cross turnpike roads four times, and, in wet seasons, it was in some places almost up to the belly in mire

Another annual holiday which was for a long period a very popular one, was the mock hunting of the hare on the Danes' hills on Easter Monday

Our local historian, Throsby, who had opportunities during many years of being an eye witness of the proceedings on these occasions, thus describes them under the year 1767 —

" It had long before been customary, on Easter Monday, for the Mayor and his brethren, in their scarlet gowns, attended by their proper officers, in form, to go to a certain close, called *Black-Annis' Bower Close*, parcel of, or bordering upon, Leicester Forest, to see the diversion of hunting, or rather the trailing of a cat before a pack of hounds a custom, perhaps, originating out of a claim to the royalty of the forest Hither, on a fair day, resorted the young and old, and those of all denominations In the greatest harmony the spring was welcomed The morning was spent in various amusements and athletic exercises, till a dead cat, about noon, was prepared by aniseed water, for commencing the mock hunting of the hare In about half an hour, after the cat had been trailed at the tail of a horse over the grounds, in zig-zag directions, the hounds were directed to the spot where the cat had been trailed

¹ "History of Leicester," p 363

from Here the hounds gave tongue in glorious concert The people from the various eminences, who had placed themselves to behold the sight, with shouts of rapture, gave applause, the horsemen dashing after the hounds through foul passages, and over fences, were emulous for taking the lead of their fellows It was a scene, upon the whole, of joy, the governing and the governed in the habits of freedom, enjoying together an innocent and recreating amusement, serving to unite them in bonds of mutual friendship, rather than to embitter their days with discord and disunion As the cat had been trailed to the Mayor's door, through some of the principal streets, consequently the dogs and horsemen followed After the hunt was over, the Mayor gave a handsome treat to his friends, in this manner the day ended ”¹

This, as well as other municipal festivals, was attended by the town waits clothed in their scarlet gowns and wearing their silver chains and badges, and we have already quoted an instance when the town waits having been dismissed, the Northampton waits were paid “for playing before the companies on *Easter Monday*, and at *May-day* fair” in their stead

We have no record of the period when the municipal authorities first went, as a body, to hunt the hare on the Danes' hills Throsby, it will be seen, surmises that the custom originated out of a claim to the *royalty of the forest* This could scarcely be the case, as the forest had been held from time immemorial as part of the demesne of the ancient earls of

¹ “History of Leicester,” p 166, note

Leicester, and passed to the crown in the person of Henry IV. There is no doubt, however, that the burgesses of Leicester, long before the Conquest, possessed certain rights and privileges in the forest as regarded pasturage, the collection of the fallen timber for fuel, &c., and as we learn from "Domesday-book" that in the time of Edward the Confessor, among the payments and services due by custom to the Sovereign from the town of Leicester, was the annual presentation of a hawk¹—a frequent service in the middle ages to the supreme lord for the privilege of hunting in the forests, or of "free warren," as we learn from Blount's "Ancient Tenures," &c.—it is therefore far from improbable that when the forest was disforested and enclosed, in the reign of Charles I., this formal ceremony of hunting in their state robes was adopted by the corporation as an assertion of their right of free-warren over the lands in question. "The wood and coal money," still annually distributed in the town, is derived from the rent of certain forest land, set apart for the benefit of the burgesses in lieu of their ancient right to collect wood in the forest.

A charter granted by Henry I. to the City of London recites that "the citizens of London may have chases, and hunt as well, *and as fully as their ancestors have had*,² showing that these privileges were of ancient standing. Fitzstephen, who wrote towards the close of the reign of Henry II., says

¹ It is stated in Thomson's "Magna Charta" (p. 352), that "part of the farm of the Royal Demesne Towns was paid in Hawks."

² Maitland's "History of London," book 1, chap. vi.

that the Londoners delight themselves with hawks and hounds, for they have the liberty of hunting in Middlesex and other places

In that curious work, "Machyn's Diary," under the year 1562, we have the following quaint description of the annual hunting of the hare, &c, by the Corporation of London—a ceremony which assimilated very closely, in the main, to the Easter hunting at Leicester, and both, probably, had a similar origin—

"The 18th day of September my lord mayor, and my masters the aldermen, and many worshipfull men, and divers of the masters and wardens of the xii companies rode to the conduit heads for to see them, after the old custom, and afore dinner they hunted the hare and killed, and so to dinner to the head of the conduit, for there was a number, and had good cheer of the chamberlain, and after dinner to hunting of the fox, and there was a goodly cry for a mile, and after the hounds killed the fox at the end of St Giles's, and there was a great cry at the death, and blowing of horns and so rode through London my lord mayor Haiper with all his company home to his own place in Lombard-street "¹

Many payments relating to this annual holiday occur in our accounts, but, although we learn that the mayor and his brethren hunted *elsewhere* at least a century earlier, we do not find any entry relating to the Easter hunting on the Dane's hills prior to the year 1668. As the payment, however, of 10s "to Mr Fawnt and Sir John Bale's huntsmen upon Easter Monday," is without any special order annexed, it is probable that it was merely the con-

¹ Page 292

tinuance of a long-established custom—the gratuity to the huntsmen being then paid out of the public purse instead of out of private contributions by the Corporation. The probability also is that, as originally instituted, the custom was for a *real* hunting of the hare to take place—the introduction into the ceremony of the dead cat scented with aniseed being of long subsequent date, and arising from the scarcity of hares in the locality or some other cause. This is indicated by an amusing entry which occurs in the account for 1671, from which it appears that if the worthy mayor and his brother sportsmen did not really commit much destruction amongst the game by their hunting, they, at least, wished it to seem so. The entry is as follows—“*Itm p^d to two-and-twenty men that brought and carried hares before Mr Mayor and the Aldermen, by Mr Mayor's order*” The auditors considered, we suppose, that this expenditure was not necessary to support the dignity of his worship on the occasion, for the payment was disallowed.

The hounds were lent for the sport by the various county gentlemen residing in the neighbourhood, who were also, doubtless, the guests of the corporation at the hunting feast, and amongst those whose huntsmen were rewarded for their attendance, in addition to those already mentioned, were Sir Henry Beaumont, Mr Mead, and Sir Edward Cave.

A similar annual custom of hare-hunting was at one time practised by the Corporation of Leicester at Whetstone of which place they were the Lords of the Manor, and held a court there, when suit and service were done by the tenants on which occasions, as might be anticipated, a good dinner was provided at the public expense, and a fee was paid to the steward.

of the court. In the chamberlains' account for the year 1574 we have an entry of 12^d "given to the *hare-finders* at Whetston Court"—a term used by Shakespeare in "Much Ado about Nothing," and which has greatly puzzled his commentators. A note respecting it will be found in the Appendix.

On the 5th of September, 1718, the corporation at a Common Hall then held, ordered "that for the future, at the hunting-feast, which is yearly on Easter Monday the twenty-four,¹ in then formalties, attend Mr Mayor into the field, if the weather permit, *according to the ancient custom*, and what entertainment shall be given that day shall be at the charge of the Mayor only, upon foifeiture of 20*l*, the late additional salary."

Throsby, writing in 1791, says that since a violent contested election, which occurred in 1767 and lasted fourteen days, this "innocent holiday has been gradually dwindling into disuse," and that "some Mayors have given it as a reason, why *they* disused the feast, and consequently the custom that *improper people* obtruded themselves upon the company at dinner. Perhaps (he continues,) a more cogent reason may be assigned. The Mayor is allowed a certain sum of money to keep up the dignity of his office during his year, feast or no feast the receipt is the same from the town purse.²

Although the corporation hunting has long been discontinued, traces of the old custom still exist in the annual holiday, or fair, yet held on the Danes' Hills and the Fosse Road, on Easter Monday, which is now attended by comparatively few persons,

¹ i.e. the Aldermen

² "Hist. Leices," p. 160, note

but which, not many years since, attracted a large concourse of the more youthful portion of the population. This, like so many other old customs, is gradually dying away.

The facetious Tom D'Urfey¹ has ridiculed the hunting of the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City in his ballad called "London Customs," and in a manner which might, doubtless, be equally applicable at the time to our own less important municipal rulers. After describing the passage of the Lord Mayor and his company through the city into Essex, "where once a year a hunting they go," he says —

"My lord he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er,
 I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before,
 A creature bounceth from a bush, which made them all to
 laugh,
 My lord he cried a hare! a hare! but it proved an Essex calf
 "And when they had done their sport, they came to London
 where they dwell,
 Their faces all so torn and scratch'd, their wives scarce knew
 them well,
 For 'twas a very great mercy so many 'scap'd alive,
 For of twenty saddles carried out, they brought again but
 five!"

Leicester had, unfortunately, no poet thus to celebrate the deeds of our local Nimrods, however worthy they might be of the same renown.

Another ancient custom, now abolished, was the sport known as the *Whipping Toms*, which was held in that part of the precincts of Leicester Castle called the *Newarke*, originally the *New-Work*, an area of considerable extent. Throsby, in whose time this unique sport was in full operation, thus describes it —

¹ "Pills to Purge Melancholy," 1719, vol. iv, p. 42

“Here is held an annual fair on Shrove Tuesday, chiefly for the amusement of young people of both sexes in Leicester. On this day formerly was practised in this place, in its full extent, the barbarous custom of throwing at cocks, where some were tied to a stake, and others set at liberty, in consequence of their being trained, to shift for themselves from the well-aimed blow of boys and men, who, with bludgeons, by giving a certain sum of money (generally two-pence), had six throws. Now the amusement on Shrove Tuesday is confined to the purchase of oranges, gingerbread, &c., and what is called the ancient sport of *Whipping Toms*, a practice, I apprehend, originally instituted by the dwellers in the Newark to drive away the rabble, after a certain hour, from the fair. It is now the sport of boys and boyish men, two, three, or more men, armed with cart-whips, and with a handkerchief tied over one eye, are let loose upon the people to flog them, who are, in general, guarded with boots on their legs and sticks in their hands. These whip-men, called *Whipping Toms*, are preceded (followed) by a bell-man, whose shake of his handbell gives a token or authority for whipping the legs of those who dare to remain in the Newark. Many arts and devices are practised by the Whipping Toms to take the people by surprise, but quarrels sometimes ensue in consequence, which beggar description. The approach of night ends this annual holiday.”¹

I have myself on several occasions, when a boy, witnessed this singular spectacle from the garden of one of the houses in the Newark. The sports usually

¹ “History of Leicester,” p. 356

began about ten or eleven o'clock in the morning of Shrove Tuesday, the principal game being that of "Shinney," or "Hockey"¹. All other proceedings were, however, superseded by the Whipping Toms, who commenced operations at one o'clock. After that hour any persons passing through the Newark were liable to be whipped, unless they paid a fee to any or all of the Whipping Toms by whom they might be met or pursued, who, however, were not by custom allowed to whip above the knee, and any one kneeling down was safe from attack so long as he remained in that posture.

Many of the lower class, and occasionally some "fast" young fellows of the middle class (who came "to see the fun"), would take what was called "two pennyworth of whipping," or, in other words, would take part in a kind of *fencing match*—the Whipping Tom endeavouring to whip their legs with his long cart-whip, and the others endeavouring to ward off the blows with their long sticks with all the skill of which they were master. Occasionally a well-directed blow would take effect, the stroke often cutting through the stocking² of the unskilful or incautious recipient. On these occasions a ring would be formed round the pair of antagonists, and whilst the attention of the spectators was engrossed by the exciting contest going on before their eyes, they would be suddenly startled by the warning sound of the bells, and find themselves attacked in the rear by the other Whipping Toms, when they would scamper in all directions, sometimes, however, by surrounding the

¹ Described by Mr Halliwell, in his "Archaic Dictionary," under the name of "Bandy."

² See Mr W Gardiner's "Music and Friends," vol 1, p 366

bellman, they would succeed in silencing "that awful bell," and thus, for a time, render the Whipping Tom powerless, until one of his companions, with his attendant bell, should rush to the rescue.

The "bounds," beyond which everyone was safe from attack, were the *Magazine* Gateway, the *Turret* Gateway, the lane leading to *Rupert's Tower* (part of the old town wall), and the passage between Trinity Hospital and St. Mary's Vicarage, leading to the Pike-yard, which it seems was at one time "dignified by the name of Little London."¹

It was formerly the custom on this day for the lads and lasses to meet in the spacious gallery of the women's ward in Trinity Hospital, and to play at "Thread-the-Needle," and other similar games. This, however, from its annoying the aged inmates, was discontinued a few years before the *sport* of Whipping Toms was finally abolished. All attempts to put a stop to the practice of this ancient custom (which certainly was one "more honoured in the breach than the observance,") had proved futile, until, at length, the aid of an Act of Parliament was called in to abolish it a clause with that object being embodied in the "Leicester Improvement Act," which received the royal assent on the 18th of June, 1846. As this clause (the 41st) clearly indicates the strong hold which this annual sport retained upon many of the people, even at that recent period, it is here given —

"Whereas a certain custom or practice called 'Whipping Toms' has for many years existed in a public place called the Newarke, in the said Borough,

¹ As stated in a communication to Hone's "Year Book" (p. 539) on this subject.

on Shrove Tuesday, which has caused large numbers of people to assemble there, who by the sport there carried on occasion great noise and inconvenience not only to persons residing in the Newarke, but to the inhabitants of the said borough generally, by preventing persons not engaged in the said sports from passing along the said place without subjecting themselves to the payment of money, which is demanded of them to escape being whipped Be it therefore enacted, That from and after the passing of this Act the said custom or practice called Whipping Toms shall be, and the same is hereby declared to be unlawful, and in case any person or persons shall on Shrove Tuesday in any year after the passing of this Act play at Whipping Toms, shindy, football, or any other game on any part of the said place called the Newarke, or stand, or be in the said place with any whip, stick, or other instrument for the purpose of playing thereat, he or they shall forfeit and pay for every such offence any sum not exceeding the sum of five pounds, to be recovered in like manner as other penalties created by this Act, and it shall be lawful for any police constable or peace officer of the said borough without any warrant whatsoever to seize and apprehend any person offending as aforesaid, and forthwith to convey him before any justice of the peace, in order to his conviction for the said offence ”

On the Shrove Tuesday following the passing of this Act although due notice had been given to the public of the consequences, great numbers of the “roughs” among the working-classes, together with the old Whipping Toms, assembled in the Newarke, with the determination to have their sport as usual, and it was only after a serious collision between the

police and the people, during which many heavy blows were given and returned, that the authorities at length succeeded in clearing the Newarke, several of the ringleaders in the affair being taken into custody.

Thus, by force of law, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was brought to an end the unique sport of Whipping Toms, a custom whose origin and meaning are lost in the mists of antiquity, for on these points all is conjecture, nor do we find any clear traces of a similar custom existing, at any period, in other parts of the kingdom.

One local tradition is, that it was instituted to commemorate the expulsion of the Danes from Leicester, on Hock Day, A.D. 1002, when nearly all the Danes in England were massacred¹. Another, and, we think, a much more plausible theory, is that it owes its origin to John of Gaunt, and that it was a tenure by which certain privileges granted by him to the inhabitants of the locality were maintained,² the Newarke—in which stood the collegiate church (the burial place of the House of Lancaster), the houses of the canons, and the hospital founded by Earl Henry in 1330—as well as “the Castle View,” on the northward side of the castle, having been, until very recently, extra-parochial. We have already alluded to the still more barbarous custom of “Bull-running” at Tutbury, which, it seems probable, was instituted by John of Gaunt, and from the very curious ceremonies which he prescribed to be observed as the tenure by which the land he conferred upon certain

¹ Thompson's ‘History of Leicester,’ p. 18, note

² Gardiner's ‘Music and Friends,’ vol. 1, p. 366

Ratby men was to be held, in commemoration of a romantic incident, which is narrated at length by Throsby,¹ and which ceremonies are still, in part, kept up, we may conclude that this celebrated man had a considerable spice of eccentricity in his disposition, and that his great popularity in this neighbourhood was due, in some degree, to the freedom with which he occasionally mingled in the sports of the people

The only use of the term "Whipping Tom" we have met with elsewhere than in Leicester, is in a quotation from Aubrey, in Thoms' "Anecdotes and Traditions,"² where mention is made of "A Whipping Tom in Kent, who disciplined the wandering maids and women till they were afraid to walk abroad" Upon this passage Mr Thoms observes—"Whipping Tom's Rod for a proud Lady," is the title of a satirical tract, published about the year 1744 Whipping Tom himself (adds the learned editor) would appear to bear some resemblance to Mumbo Jumbo, "who disciplined the wandering maids and women" of Africa"

The great antiquity, the unknown origin, and the unique character of this curious local sport, coupled with its being now entirely obsolete, have led to its being dilated upon at far greater length than its rude nature would otherwise have merited

It now remains only to refer briefly to one other subject, entries respecting which occur among our very earliest and also our latest extracts, namely, the practice of "unlawful games"

In the "ordinance," or bye-laws, made by the Cor-

¹ "Leicestershire Views," vol 11, pp 83-86

² Printed for the Camden Society, p 101

poration of Leicester in the year 1467, it was forbidden that any one should play for silver at any of the following games, under pain of imprisonment, that is to say, at dice, " carding," hazaiding, tennis, bowles, " pykkyng" with arrows, quoiting with horse-shoes, penny-prick football, or chequer-in-the-mire. And this regulation was confirmed at a Common Hall in the 31st Henry VII, when all persons were forbidden to play for money at " dyce, cards, bowles, *half-bowle*, hasaidynge, tennys, pryckyng with aallowes, coytyng with stones or coytynge with horse-shoue, penny-pryk, foteball, *classhe coyles*, checker-in-the-mire, or *shore grote*"¹

Of these games we meet with the following descriptions — Hazard is explained by Halliwell as "a pool for balls in some ancient games of chance," — " carding" means of course, playing at cards, " pykkyng" (or pitching) with arrows, was probably throwing arrows from the hand at a mark, penny-prick was "a game consisting of throwing oblong pieces of iron at a mark," as we learn from the Glossary to Hunter's " Hallamshire," whilst Grose describes it as " throwing at halfpence placed on sticks which are called hobs." We have the following allusion to it in a poem in 1616²

" Their idle houres (I meane all houres beside
Their houres to eate, to drinke, drab, sleepe and ride)
They spend at shove-boord, or at *penny-priche*"

Of the game of checker-in-the-mire we cannot find any explanation, unless it be the same as Shakespeare

¹ " Town Book of Acts," p 27

² Scot's " Philomythie," quoted in Halliwell's " Archaic Dictionary "

alludes to in "Romeo and Juliet,"¹ when he makes Mercutio say, "If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire," which is described by Gifford² as a Christmas gambol, in which a log of wood is brought into the midst of the room which is dun (the cart-horse), and a cry being raised that he is *stuck in the mire*, the game consists in the attempts made by the company to draw him out. Perhaps the proper reading of the name in our MSS. should be *checky* (*i.e.* the pig) in the mire.

Shakespeare also alludes to the game of shove-groat in "Henry IV,"³ where Falstaff says, "Quoit him down, Bardolph, like a *shove-groat* shilling," or, in other words, Bardolph was to quoit Pistol down stairs as quickly as the smooth shilling—the shove-groat—flies along the board. Shove-groat is called, in a statute of the 33rd of Henry VIII, a *new* game, and was no doubt originally played with the silver groat. The broad shilling of Edward VI came afterwards to be used in this game, which was in all probability the same as shovel-board, with the exception that the latter was on a larger scale. Master Slender, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," had his pocket picked of "two Edward shovel-boards, that cost him two and two pence a piece." Slender's costly shillings, says Mr. Knight, were probably lucky ones. Mr. Halliwell, in describing the game, says that "a shilling or other smooth coin was placed on the extreme edge of the shovel-board, and pro-

¹ Act i, sc 4

² Ben Jonson's Works, vol vii, p 282, and his description is quoted by Mr. Charles Knight, in his notes to this play, in his "Pictorial Shakespeare."

³ Part ii, act ii, sc 4

elled towards a mark by a smart stroke with the palm of the hand. It is mentioned under various names, according to the coin employed, as shove-groat, &c. The game of shove-halfpenny is mentioned in the "Times" of April 25th, 1845, as then played by the lower orders¹

Under the year 1578 we find it recorded that on the 23rd of December, "Mr Mayor caused the statute for the avoiding of unlawful games to be openly read at the High-cross, in Leicester, to the end that the inhabitants therein may refrain the same."

This was probably done in anticipation of a visit from "one Johnson and his fellow, who have a commission to enquire of unlawful games," to whom very shortly afterwards a fee or gratuity of 20s was paid, and in 1580 the like sum was paid to Johnson, "that he should not deal within this town."

On the 19th of September, 1599, we find Abraham Clarke, on being examined before the magistrates, acknowledging that he and some others played at the boards, called the "shovell a borde," in Richard Rydyng's house, and that he lost about 8d in ale.

The last of our extracts, in 1749, records the prosecution of "one Richardson and others, shapemis, by pricking at a game called *pricking in the old hat*."

This cheating game is now obsolete and undescribed, but it was probably similar in character to that called "pricking at the belt," or girdle, also named playing at "Fast and Loose," which is described by Brand, in his "Popular Antiquities," "to have been a game much practised by the gipsies in the time of Shakespeare."

¹ "Archæc Diction 1y"

Here we bring this introductory portion of our labours to a close, and, although it has greatly exceeded the limits originally intended, we fear that on many points it is still very imperfect. We trust, however, that whatever may be its imperfections and short-comings (and doubtless they are many), it will not be found entirely devoid of interest to the general reader, as presenting, as far as possible, in the form of a consecutive narrative, a view of the rise and progress of the English stage, and descriptions, more or less full, of the other popular amusements in the days of "Sweet Shakespeare," who, in this month of April, three centuries ago, first saw the light of that world in which his name was destined to become immortal, and to which he has bequeathed that glorious and inestimable legacy—the imperishable fruits of his genius. How truly does the poet say—

"His was the master-spirit,—at his spells
The heut gave up its secrets like the Mount
Of Horeb, smitten by the Prophet's rod,
Its hidden springs gushed forth Time, that gley rock
On whose bleak sides the fame of meaner bards
Is dashed to ruin, was the pedestal
On which his genius rose, and, rooted there,
Stands like a mighty statue, reared so high
Above the clouds and changes of the world,
That Heaven's unshorn and unimpeded beams
Have round its awful brows a glory shed
Immortal as then own Like those fair birds
Of glittering plumage, whose heaven-pointed pinions
Beam light on that dim world they leave behind,
And while they spurn, adorn it, so his spirit,
His 'dainty spirit,' while it soared above
This dull, gross compound, scattered as it flew
Treasures of light and loveliness"



EXTRACTS, ETC

1467

HE ordeñnce made by Richarde Gillot
Mayre of the Town of Leycesti and his
Brethern and by the aduise and assent of
all the Comons of the same Towne at a
Comon Halle holden at Leycesti the Thursday next
afore the feste of Symonde day and Jude in the yere
of the reigne of our Souayen lorde Kyng Edwardre the
fourth after the conquest of Ynglond the viij^t

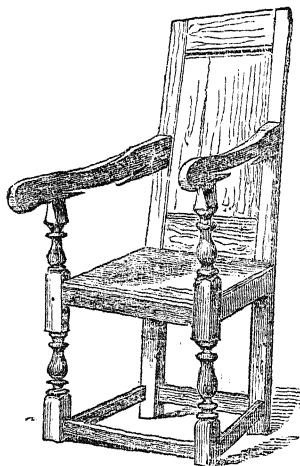
The Mayre comaundeth on the Kyngs behalfe [*inter alia*]

That no bocher kylle no bull to selle w^tinne this
Towne but yf hit be bayted before in payne of for-
fetuer ther off

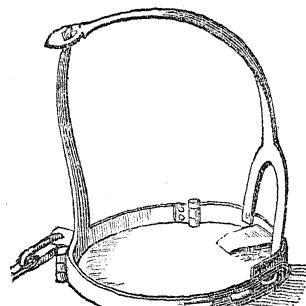
Also that alle mani Scholdys that are dwellyng
w^tinne this Town, man or woman that are founde defec-
tyf by sworne men before the maire p^sented, that than
hit shall be lefull to the same mayre for to ponyssh
them on a Cukstoooll a fore there dore as long as hym
lyketh, and thanne so to be caried forth to the iijth gates
of the Town

Also that no man of the Town nor of the Cuntray
play w^tinne the fraunchys of this Town for syluer at
no vnlawfull games that been defended by the statute

and lawe, and by the plement, that is for to sey at dyce,
cardinge, haserdyng, Tenes, Bowlys, pykkyng with



THE CUCKING-STOOL
AT LEICESTER.



THE BRANK OR GOSSIP'S BRIDLE
AT LEICESTER.

arowes, Coytyng w^t horsshou, penypryk, foteball, ne
cheker in the myre, in Payne of in prisonment. And
the owner of the hows, gardens or places where the
playes been vsed, as often as hit is so founden and vsed
shall paye to the Chamblens iiiijrd and e sy player vjrd to
the same Chamblens to the vse of the Comons

Also that all man^t men inhabitaunts w^tinne this Town
that be warned or somened by the constable or any other
of the maires officers to come [at an owre]¹ to the

¹ The words within brackets are interlined in the original in a different ink, and a later, but still ancient hand, probably at the same time that the amount of the penalties was reduced. It shows, however, that the Mayor and Corporation attended officially at the annual ceremony of the "Riding of the George."

Comon Hall or to attend vpon the maire to ryde agenst the Kyng or for [Riding of the George or]¹ eny other thing that shal be to the pleasure of the maire and worshyppe for the Town, yf any man, so warned, absent hym, w'oute cause resonable, or speciall licence of the maire, he or they shall forfeitt, that is to sey, euy of the maires Brethern ij^s,² and euy comener xij^d² that to be leuyed by y^e Chamburlayns to the vse and pfete of the Comons &c —[Hall Book, p 229-238]

1478

Anno R^e Edwardi quarti post conqm decimo septi
 At a Comon Halle holden at Ley^c on the xxvj^t day
 of Marche in the yere afore written at the which Comon
 Halle the pleyers the which pleid the passion play the
 yere next afore brought yne a byll the whiche was of
 Sten devties of mony and whed^r the passion shulbe put
 to Crafts to be bounden or nay And at y^t tyme the
 seid pleyers gaff to the pachents y^r mony which that
 thei had getten yn playng of the seid play e^u fore to
 that day and all y^r Raymentts w^t al oth^r man^u of stuff
 y^t they had at that tyme And at the same Comon
 Halle be the advyse of all the Comons was chosen thies
 psones aft^r named for to haue the gydyng and Rule of
 the seid play

Roger Wigston	Richard Clement
Robert Cheringham	William Blakwyn
William Holbeche	John Geffre
John Wigston	Thomas Borne
John Robedes	Thomas Henstoke
Thomas Thowithby	John Swan
Thomas Whittowe	John Sothewode

¹ See note on preceding page

² Altered, in the same hand as the above interlineations, to
 xij^d and vj^d respectively

Robert Croft	}	Thomas Godeson Richard Crosse	} bedalls
Thomas Hurst			
Thomas Swyke			
John May			
Thomas Wigston			

[*Hall Book*, p 2]

1481

Gilda Marcatoris

Henricus Howman, Harper — [*Hall Book*, p 15]

1495

In y^e tyme of Mayralte of Th^e Hurst yan beynge
Mayre at a Comon Hall holden in Leycest^r at
Corpus Christi Halle on fryday nyxt after xiij^{te} day the x
yere of Kyng Henry the viij^{te} by the holl assent and
agrement of the mayre and hys bredyrr and allso of
all the xlviij ther beynge present in thys maſſ & forme y^t
ys ordent agreyt stabelechyd & acte for the comon well
of the town and of seche guds as ys yn a store hows in
the set^h day marcat¹ y^t ys to say wodde tymber and
vdyr playyng germands² yf ther be ony her hys chosyn
to be oſſears therof

Richard Gyllott	}	Thomas Whyttour Johes Croooke Johes Barton Bartellmow Lyons Johes Lokeour	} }
Thomas Whyttour			
Johes Croooke			
Johes Barton			
Bartellmow Lyons			
Johes Lokeour			

[*Hall Book*, p 57]

¹ Saturday Market

² Garments “Peyd for hyryng of *Geſmentes*”—*Shakespeare Society Papers*, vol II, p 45

1499

Gilda Marcatoris in tempe With Wigston senior
 Thomas Wylkyns *Wayte* —[*Hall Book*, p 65]

Be it remebred y^t it was cōdecended acted & stab-
 lyshed at a Coīmen Hall holden xxij day of Septem̄
 A° R̄ H septimi qnto decimo that eūy of xlviij y^t
 hathe ben Chambleyns shall pay to the vp holdyng of
 Saynt Georgys Gild by yeī vj^d & the y^t hathe not ben
 Chambleyns shall pay at the leyst iiiij^d or moī if the
 please

And it is cōdecended & agreed at the same Coīmen
 Hall y^t eūy of the sayd xlviij shall pay to the watsy
 ij^d a quart —[*Hall Book*, p 65]

1523

Ad Cōem Allam teñ^l Ibidem in die Venī is p & post
 fñm Sc̄i Huḡ Ep̄i Anno R̄ H Octaui Quinto decimo
 ffor the Rydyng of the Gorge

It is enactyd at the same Comon Hall be the seyd
 meyr & hys brethern the xxvijth and the xlviijth electyd
 of the Comyns that this acte ffoloyng to be of effect
 and eñ more to theym that shall com̄ her aft^r to be
 ferme and stable that who soeū be the Maister off
 Seynt Georgis Gylde shall cause the George to be
 Rydyn accordyng to the olde auncient Costome y^t ys to
 say betwyx Sent Georgys day and Wytsondes except
 a causse reaſonnable and he or they that make deffaute
 in Rydyng of the seid Georg of y^e seid Maist^r or
 Maisters to fforfet ffrome the day of this acte forth-
 wards, v^l, and that to be leuied of y^e seid Maist^r or
 Maisters to y^e behave & use of the seid Gyld by the
 Meir ffor the tyme beyng and the Chambrleyns and
 yf y^e seid Meyr & Chambleyns be negligent or lachius

¹ *Lacheous*, from *laches*, slackness or negligence.

in levyeng of y^e seid fforfet that then the Meire to fforfet xxvj^s viij^d and eyther Chamburleyn to fforfet vj^s viij^d and to be peyd to the p^fset of the same gyld

More ou^t it is agreyd at the same Acte that all forfeits mayd by the Masters that haue bene seyth¹ the laste tyme that the Georg was Ryden shall be brought in and payd to the behowe and p^fset of the same Gyld of eis^y Maist^r beyng behynd, xxvj^s viij^d —[Hall Book, p 160]

1524
Itm^m peid ffor the wayts lyfies² xvj^s

1530
Itm^m gyfn to my lade prynces pleares³ iiij^s iiij^d

1531
Itm^m yt is agreed be the wole assent of y^e xxiiij^{te} the vth daye of Apryll in y^e raene of Kyng Henry y^e viij^{te} y^e xxiiij^{te} That Mast^l Kryst^l Clughtt shud nott Ryde y^e George nott yis yere ffor dyueres cōsiderasions, so y^t y^e holde hacted shall stand in fful strenghtt as he hasse done afore tyme —[Hall Book, p 290]

Itm^m Rx of Mast^l Cloughtt for y^e redymyng
y^e Rydyng of y^e George xlvj^s viij^d
Itm^m paed to y^e Kyngs pleares⁴ iiij^s iiij^d
Itm^m paede to my lade prynces pleares iiij^s

1533
Itm^m reseuyd of Mr Garsett for not
Rydyng of y^e Gorge iiiij marks

Sith, sithence, *since* —HALLIWELL ² Liveries

³ See Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, pp 89-92

⁴ Ibid , p 97, note

1534

Thys byll mayd of all y^e costys and chargys whych
I Wyllm Byller hath lede forthe off my purse

Inprimis for a yarde and a halfe of Ken-
daull

xvj^d

And also for my costys and chargys
gowing here and there geuyng tendance
to Robyn Hode, and because of hym
bowght smaule tryfylls w^{ch} draw unto
other

xvj^d

And also I hyard a chote¹ ij days w^{ch} chost

iiij^d

And also I borrowyd a shorde and a
bokelar,² w^{ch} showrde and bokelar he
allmust bothe loste, whereby I must
pay for lendyng of them

vij^d

And many other thyngys whyche I wyll
not recon a pon

Smiijs^s viij^d

[From a book of copies of Wills, in the Archdeaconry
Court, Leicester]

1536

Itm receyvd of Mr Thomas Cressy ffor

not Rydyng of the George

xls^s

Itm paid ffor dryssyng of the dragon

iiij^s

1537

Itm paid to the yerle of Darbyes³

blayars

v^s

Itm to the Lorde Secretars⁴ players

vjs^svij^d

Itm paid to o^r prynsys⁵ players

vjs^svij^d¹ Coat² A sword and a buckle³ Collier, vol 1, p 84, note⁴ See AppendixCollier, *ut supra*

1539

M^d that the vj day of Octob^r cam beffore M^r Nicholls R^cynolds then beyng Mayre of the towne of Leices^t & Rob^t Newcum & Nicholls Heyrycke Camarus that ys to wytt that the Weytts collars waytht xxiiij off & dr^r [*Hall Book*, p 361]

1541

Itm paid ffor the Weyts leyfes to Mr Gyllott	xxiiij ^s
Itm to the Weytys in money	iii ^d
Itm paed to Thomas Goldsmith ffor mendyng of the Towne Waytes Collars	iiij ^s iiiij ^d
Itm to y ^e Kyngs bairward	ij ^s vj ^d

1542

Itm re ^d of Maister May for Rydyng of the George	xli ^s
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1546

Itm p ^d for a gallon of wyne to my lord M ^r ques consett ¹ when they came to Bamfords Weddinge	xiiij ^d
---	--------------------

1547

Itm p ^d to S ^r Henry Pkers plers ²	xx ^d
---	-----------------

¹ Consort, a company or band of musicians—HALLIWELL
In 1599 Morley printed a “First Booke of *Consorte Lessons*,” for six instruments to play together The nobleman referred to was the Marquis of Dorset

² See Appendix

1548

Itm p ^d to Mr Gyllott for the Wayghts gownes	xxvj ³	vj ¹
Itm p ^d to Rob ^t Goldsmith for an ownce of syluer & twelve pence on wayght for the repacōns of the Wayghts collers & for the workmanshype		'v ²
Itm p ^d to my lord ptectors plers ¹ at the coīnaundement of Mr Mayor	v	
Itm p ^d to the Kyngs mynstrells	v	
Itm p ^d to my lord m ^{ques} Suant w th the dauncyng horse	ij	' j ¹

1549

Itm p ^d to Lockwood the Kyngs Jester	ij	vij ^d
Itm p ^d to my lord m ^{ques} berward	ij	

1550

Itm p ^d to my lord m ^{ques} pleyres of Northamp ^t the xxx ^t day of Novemb ^r	j	vij ^a
---	---	------------------

1551

Itm p ^d to my Lord of Huntyngdon berward the xxj ^t day of Marche		vij ^d
Itm p ^d for the expences that went to the buck that my lady of Huntyng- don gave to the xlviij ^t whych was ordeyned at the hall for the Company & they cam not because of the play that was in the church whych w th bred, alle, flower, pepp, bakynge, & other chargs amontyth to the some of	x	

¹ See Appendix
O

1552

Itm p^d to Lockwood the Kyngs Jester ij^s
 Itm p^d to the duke of Northmblands
 players vs

1555

Itm p^d for the Wayghts gownes xxxvj^s
 Itm p^d to Rob^t Goldsmith for mendyng
 the Wayghts collers vx^d
 Itm p^d to the quenes plaers ou & above
 that was gatherd ij^s vj^d

1556

Payd to Wilm Gyllott for ix yards of
 Clothe at fure shyllyns the yarde for
 the Weyts gownes xxxvjs

1557

Re^d that was lefte at a pley xiii^d
 P^d to the Quenes Players¹ ij^s

1558

Itm geven to my Lorde of Huntingdon
 Beare warde vs

1559

Itm to the Quenes plears besyde the
 money that was gatheryd ij^s iiij^d

1560

It payd to my lord Wyllowbys plears
 more then was gathered xvjd
 It paid to Mr Henry Parkers (?) plears
 more then was gathered ij^s

¹ See Collici, vol 1, p 164

It paid to my lady of Suffolkes pleas
more then was gathered

111^s

1561

It paid more to the Quenes pleas more
than was gaythered in the
pleas more then was
gaythered

111^s vij^c

It paid to one pear that pleid alone

vij^s

It paid to the Weats for pleying before
M^r Mayor at Michelmas feer

ij^s

It paid to my lorde of Huntyngdon
bear Warde more

1562

Itm paid to my lorde Oxfords players
more then was gaythered ,

111^s

Itm to the Quenes Jester
Shewartes for the Wetes Collers

111^s111^d

Rob^t Roods for Edwards Coler,
Rychard Rawlynson for Harbyes Coler,
Thomas Lester for Cookes Coler

[Hall Boor

n , p 81]

1563

It Geven in reward to the Erle of
Wo'seyters playars the xth of Octo-
ber more then was gathered

111^s

It paid to my lord Robts¹ players the
xiijth of November more then was
gathered

vij^s

It paid to the Quenes Gester the xxth of
November

111^s111^s

¹ Lord Robert Dudley afterwards Earl of Leicester see
Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, pp 169 200 205,
210, &c

1564

It to the playars of Coventrye more then was gatherd on twelf evin	xx ^d
It geven to my lord of Lughborowes Jester the next fryday after	xij ^d
It geven to S ^t Henry Clyntons Ber- ward the ix th of January	ij ^s
It geven to my lord Robts players the first day of Julye	x ^s
It geven to S ^r Owmfrey Ratlyffs players the v th of July	ijij ^s
It geven to the Quenes players the second daye of August	xiiij ^s iiiij ^d
It geven in Reward to my lord of Darbys Beſward the xxv th of Sep- tember	iiij ^s iiiij ^d
It to M ^r Gyllott for the Weatts gownes	lvij ^s viij ^d
It payed to my lord of Huntingdons bearward moe then was gaythered	v ^s
Itm payed to my lord Scropes pleas more then was gatheryd	iiij ^s viij ^d
Itm payed to my lord of Hunsdons pleers more than was gaytheryd	v ^s
Itm payed to M ^r Hibbatts pleas more then was gaytheryd	ij ^s vj ^d
Itm payed to streaunge Weatts & other mynstrells at the Mayors dū	vj ^d viij ^d
Itm payed to Edward Astell and his felowes	ij ^s
Itm payed to the chyldren that played under Mr Pott ¹	v ^s

¹ Master of the Free School, the performers being probably
the scholars

Itm̄ payed to the quenes ̄ester ij ij^d

1565

Item Geven to my lord Clytons Ber-
warde more then was gathered ij^s ij^d

Itm̄ geven to the Erle of Huntyngdons
Berward more than was gathered v^s vj^d

It geven in rewarde to the Quenes
gester ij ij^d

1566

It geven to my lorde Hastyngs of
Lughboroughs players more then was
gathered ij^s

Item geven to the Queens Berwaide
more then was gathered ij^s vij^d

It geven to the Queres Players more
then was gathered ij^s

Item geven to the Erle of Worcesters
players more then was gathered ij^s v^s

Item paid to James Ells for the Weatts
gownes xlvij x^a

Item Geven to George Warde, the
Erle of Huntingtons Bereward, at
Mr Maiors commandement, more
then was gatheryd ij vij^d

Item geven to the Quenes gester whose
name is Lockwood ij^s ij^d

An Act agaynst Waystyng of the Towre Stock

At a Comon Haule, the two-and-twerte daye of
November, in the Nynth yere of the reign of o^r S^olaign
Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God of Englan^d
ffraunce and Ireland Quene Defender of the ffait^h &c
Houlden at the towne of Leicester by the mutuall

assent, consent and agreement of M^r John Tatam then Maior of the same towne and his Brethren, callyd the xxvij, and the xlviij there assembled in the name of the whole body of the same Vnderstandyng that whereas before thys tyme the Towne Stock hathe bene & is muche dekeid by reason of geving, carynge & bestowinge of greate Gyfts, as well into the Cuntrey, as into the Towne to Noble men and women & also to other that haue sundrye tymes resortd to the said Town of Leicester, & also at the Bankets of Venyson, of gyfts and rewards geven to players, musiciens, iesters, Noblemens Bēwards, & suche lyke charg, and ys lyke daylye more & more to be dekeyd except Reformacion theiōf be spedely hadd Therefore it is inacted, determined, concluded, & ffullie agreyde at & by all the aforesaid assembled & at the same Comon Haule That ffrome & after the said daye there shalbe no suche greate Alowance paide, deliūyd, or alowed owt of the towne stock for any suche Expenc that after the said Comon Hawle shall happen But that, the spenders therof, as at the Banketts of Venyson, Playes, Beare baytyngs & suche lyke, Ēly one of the Maiores Brethren & of the xlviij beinge requyred, or havinge soiōns by the comaunderement of M^r Maior for the tyme beinge to be there shall beare ēly one of theym his & theire porcion And also that there shalbe no mañer of other gyfte geven to any Noble man or woman, or to any other pson or psons, that shalbe taken or borne of the Towne Stock, Except it be done by the consent of Maister Maior ffor the tyme beinge, with ffoure or fyve of the Awncients of his Brethren & as manye of the Awncients of the xlviij, Except fyve shillyngs and vnder or the value theiōf whiche shall or may be bestowed by the Comaunderement of M^r Maiore onely, for the tyme

beyng, ffor the worshipp of the said towne of Leices-
ter, when and as ofte as occasion shall move hym
And this Act for eu to contynewe within the said towne
of Leicester for the good Supportacion and Maynte-
nance of the said towne [Book of Acts, p 44]¹

The weight of the Weyts Collers weyed by Arthur Clarke and William Yates, Chamblyns, the xxv^{th} dae of November in the Nynth yere of the reign of o^r Soaign Ladye Quene Elizabeth, conteyneth xxvij ounces one quarter & halfe the halfe quarter [Hall Book, 11, p. 116]

1567.

Item geven to the players of Coventrye
the xxxij daye of January, more then
was gatherid

Item geuen to Sir John Beryns Players
more then was gathered, the viij^t
daye of Marche

Item geven to the Erle of Leicesters
musicians the xiiith daye of June ii^o iii^o

Item geven to S^r Thomas Knevets
musycions the viiith daye of July xx¹

Item geven to the lorde of Hunsdones
musicians the xijth day of August 111^s 111^d

1568

An Act for the vnuersall Releffe of the poore & Impotent people Inhabitinge within the towne of Leicester, over and aboue the Collec \tilde{c} on within the same towne by vertue of the Quenes Maiesties Statute

¹ This "Act" was confirmed at Common Hall held on the 4th of January 1570—[*Hall Book*, p. 174.]

At a Comon Haule the Twelveth day of Marche in the tenth yere of the reigne of our Soaign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God, of England ffrance and Ireland Quene Defendor of the faith &c Houlden at the Towne of Leicester by the mutual assent, consent, and agreement of M^r William Norys then Maior of the same towne and his brethrene callyd the xxiiij & the xlviij there assembled, in the name of the whole Body of the same It is inacted determined and fully agreyd at and by the said assembled and at the same Comon Haule as foloweth (that is to say) ffrist that frome and after the feast of the Añunciacõn of o' Lady Saynt Mary the Virgin next comynge after the date aforsaid in eury pishe within the said towne shalbe appoyned one substanciall Collector to receyve suche Sumes of Money and Contribucõn as shall come to their hands and receipt by the meanes hereafter folowinge towards the Vnusall releffe of the poore and impotent people inhabitynge within the said towne of Leicester oþ and aboue the Collection within the same towne by vertue of the Quenes Maiesties Statute, that is to say, Eury one of the Companye of the xxiiij shall paye at eury tyme of his weddyng to the Collector of the pishe where he inhabiteth, to the vse of the said poore ij^s viij^d, and eury one of the Companye of the xlviij shall paye at eury tyme of his weddyng xvi^d And eury Comon of the beste sorte within the said towne shall paye at eury tyme of his weddyng viij^d And eury seconde Comon shall paye at eury tyme of his weddyng iij^d And it is also Ordeyned for the better Releffe of the said poore people, and for the Eschuyng of the Supfluows charge and excesse of the inhabitants of the said towne of Leicester That there shalbe no feasts made at any Churchings within the said towne savinge only one

compotent messe of meate provided for *Goss p*¹ and
mydwyves And for & in consideracion thereof it is
Ordeyned and agreyd that eþy one of the said xxiiij shall
paye at eþy Churcynge of his Wyffe to the Collector
of the piske where he inhabitet to the vse of the saþd
poore people of the towne of Leicester ij^s viij^d And
eþy one of the xlviij shall paye at eþy Churcurge of
his Wyffe xvij^d And eþy Comon of the best sorte
within the said towne shall paye at eþy Churcunge of
his Wyffe viij^d And eþy second Comon shall paye at eþy
Churcynge of his Wyffe iiij^d And also at eþy Wed-
dynge and Churcynge which shall happen to be within
the same towne, the pson, vicar, minister, or clarcke shal
receyve the same Sums of money accordyng, and
deliþ the same to the Collector of the pish v he eþe such
Weddynge and Churcunge shall happen to be, by a
bill indented And furþer it is Ordeyned and agreyd
at the saide Comon Haule that frome & after the said
feast of the Annunciacon of oþr lady Saynt Maþy the
Virgin, One poore man, whiche shalbe appareled vþth
a blacke gowne and a Badge vpon his sleve, shalbe ap-
pointed to go with a Boxe, locked fast, to eþy Ine and
other places within the said towne of Leicester, where
straungers do resorte, to aske of them their Charitable
Almes towards the vnifall releffe of the poore people
within the said towne, Of the whiche Boxe M^r Maior
for the tyme beyng, or one of the Cheyffe of the xxiiij
shall kepe the Key and shall receyve weekly of the said
poore man such [sums] of money as he fyndeth in the
same Boxe, And the said M^r Maior or the receyvor of
the said money, by the consent of the said M^r Maior for
the tyme beinge with the consent of three or ffoure of the
most auncients of the xxiiij shall distribute or cause the

¹ See Appendix

same to be distributed to the poore and impotent psons inhabitynge within the said towne, as often and when as occasion shall serve, at the discrecōn of the said M^r Maior and his Brethren. And fflurther it is agleyde at the same Comon Haule that eſſy of the said ſeuall Collectors of the aforesaid Weddyngs & Churhyngeſ shall therof make accompte Quarterlye and openly in the Churche, or ſome other convenient place appoyneted, to M^r Maior for the tyme beinge, in the pſence of ſo manye of the xxiiij & xlviij as will be there, of all the receypts concernyng the ſame durynge the tyme that they and eſſy of theym have beyne in the ſaide Office, And then the ſaide Maister Maior for the tyme beinge, With the consent of three or fourre of the Cheffest of the xxiiij ſhall diſtribuite or cauſe the ſame to be diſtribuite, to the poore and impotent pſons inhabitinge within the ſaide towne as farr as all the ſaide receypts, or ſuſſes of money, will extende And if then any ouþplus theſeſ happen to remayne after any ſuſh diſtribucōn Then the ſame to be kept in the Chamber of the ſaide Towne of Leiceſter by it ſelue to the vſe of the poore, and the ſame to be diſtribuite vnto them as occaſion ſhall ſerve, at the diſcrecōn of the ſaide M^r Maior for the tyme beinge and his Brethren, as often and when as nede ſhall require

And this Act for ever to continue within the ſaide towne of Leiceſter for the vniuall releffe of the poore and impotent people inhabityng within the ſaide towne
 [Book of Acts, pp 48, 49]

Item geven in Reward to the Players of Hull more then was gathered the xij th daye of September .	iiij ^s
Item paide to John Paybodye for the Weyts gownes	iiij ^s viij ^d

1569

Itm geven in rewarde the xij th daye of Januarey to the Players of Coventry more then was gatheryd	xij
Itm Geven in rewarde to one Lockwoode the Quenes Jester	iiij
Itm geven the xxvij th daye of January to Sir Anthoney Sturleys ¹ Players moie then was gatheryd	ij
Itm geven the xxvj th daye of Maye to the Players of Sii John Beryn, Knighte, more than was gatheryd	ij
Itm geven the xix th daye of Julye to the players of Hull more then was gathered	ij ^d
Itm geven the xij th daye of September to one M ^r Smiths players more then was gathered	iiij
Itm paide to James Ellys for the weyts gownes	lv
Itm payed to the quenes gester the last day of October	ij

1570

Itm payed to the quenes plears more then was gaytherid	ij
Itm payed to M ^r Smythes plears the vij th daye of August more then was gatherid	ij
Itm geven in rewarde to one Locwoode the Quenes Mat ^{res} Jester	iiij ^a
Itm p ^d to the Weates on Michelmas daie, for waytinge upon M ^r Maior	ij

¹ *Shurley*, one of the celebrated trio of brothers

Itm p ^d to the Erle of Leicesters playōs more than was geythered	vij ^s	vj ^d
Itm p ^d to the Beareward at M ^r Mayors dynl more then was gethered	vij ^d	
Itm geven to the Lord of Burgennyes ¹		
Playars	vij ^s	vij ^d

1571

Itm geven in Rewarde to Lockwood the Quenes Ma ^{ts} Jester	vj ^s	vj ^d
Itm p ^d for Wyne that was geven to Darbie men at Mathew Norreses Weddinge	xvj ^d	
Itm geven Pleyars that did not Pley	vj ^s	
Itm geven to the Lord of Wosters Players more then was geythered	vij ^s	
Itm geven to the Pleyars of Coventrie more than was geythered	vij ^s	
Itm geven to the Quenes Ma ^{ts} her Pleyars more then was geythered	vij ^s	vij ^d
Itm geven to the Earle of Leycester his Pleyars	vij ^s	
Itm geven to the Beareward at M ^r Mayores dynl more then was gey- thered		xvj ^d
Common Hall, xvij th November xij ^o Elizabeth [<i>inter alia</i>]		
Itm that the Sargiaunts shall have gownes one yere & the Weats an other & the Siaunts to begyn this yere [<i>Hall Book</i> , p 201]		

1572

Itm geven to the Q Ma ^{ts} Jester	vj ^s	vj ^d
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¹ Abergavenny

Itm̄ geven to the lord of Wusters playars
more then was geythered

11*J*

Itm̄ p^d for iij Gallons of Wyne ij^h of
Sugar & for Cakes geven to S^r George
Hastings, Knight, & dyvers other
Knights and gentlemen at the Cocco-
pitte

xij vj^d

Common Hall held xxij^o November 15th Elizabeth
[*inter alia*] Itm̄ then agreed that the new Waytes
shall continue of lykeinge till the xxvth daye of Maiche
next [Hall Book, p 212]

1573

Common Hall, held the xviii^o febri xvth Elizabeth
[*inter alia*] Also it is furtli agreed at this said Comon
Hawle that they the nowe Weytes appoynted for the
said Towne of Leic shall have gownes for this yeare
The pce to bee vj^s viij^d or vij^s a yarde at the moeste
[Hall Book, p 217]

Itm̄ geven to the Lord of Sussux Playars
in Julye, in reward, for that they did
not play

v

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Leyster his
Bearward more than was gaythered

iij

1574

Itm̄ geven to my Lorde of Darbie his
Bearwarde and to my Lorde of Essex
menne

xxix^s ix^d

Itm̄ geven to my lorde of Leyces^t his
playōs more than was gathered

xj^s viij^d

Itm̄ geven to my Lorde of Sussex Playōs
more than was gathered

xj^s viij^d

Itm̄ paid to foure noble mens Bearewards
more than was geythered

vj^s iij^d

Itm̄ geven to the Hare fynders¹ att
Wheston Côte

xij^d

Itm̄ geven to the Players that cam̄
owte of Wales, more than was
gaythered

v^s

Itm̄ geven to my Lorde Harbards players
more then was gathered

v^s

1575

Itm̄ geven to my Lorde of Mountague
his pleyears

v^s

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Sussex² his
players more then was gathered

v^s

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Warf³ his
players more then was gathered

v^s

Itm̄ geven to certen Bearewardes more
than was geythered, v^z the Q. Maires-
ties, the Earle of Leicesters, the Earle
of Huntingdons, & the Lord Vawses⁴

xxiiij^s

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Wust⁵ his
players

x^b

1576

Item geven unto therle of Essex⁶ his
Players

x^s

¹ See Appendix

² Chalmers says that the Earl of Sussex's players began to perform at *The Rose*, on the 27th of December, 1593, yet never rose to distinguished eminence

³ Warwick John Dutton was at the head of the Company — *Collier*, vol 1, p 235

⁴ Vaux's

⁵ Worcester

⁶ Chalmers first mentions this company two years later than this notice of them He supposes that they finished their career as a company in 1601, when their patron paid the penalty of his treason See also under 1574

Itm̄ paid at Martlemas to Berewardes
more then was gaythered vij^s iiij^d

Itm̄ paid to the Quenes Maiest^s Bere-
wardes and my Lorde of Darbyes
more then was gaythered vij^s vj^d

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Warwycke
his Pleyars more then was geythered xxvij^s

Itm̄ paid to Dodd, the Goldsmith, for
xv ounces of silver for the Weytes
Collars and for mendinge or makinge
of them new vli x^s

Common Hall, held xxij^o November, 15th Elizabeth
Agreed (*inter alia*) that the Waytes have Gownes
pvided them before Christmas next [Hall Book, 11,
p 273]

1577

Itm̄ geven to Pleyars of Enterludes and
to Bearewards this yere more then
was gaythered xxvij^s x^d

Common Hall, held xxij^o November, xx Elizabeth
Hit is agreed to have Weites as aforetyme hathe byn
vsed and they to have this yeare Cotes of Orrenge
Colō & the sincke file on there sleves [Hall Book, 1,
p 286]

Itm̄ p^d for Clothe for the Weits Cootes xxxviij

1578

Emanuell¹

Itm̄ geven to George Warde & other
Bear wards at M^r Maiōs Dynī more
then was geythered ix^s vii^d

¹ See Shakespeare's "Henry VI," part II, act iv, sc 2 for
reference to the custom of writing this name "at the top of
letters," &c, as quoted in the Introduction, p 119, *ante*

Itm geven to the Quenes Maiesties Beare-wordes

xvijs

Itm p^d for iij yardes & a halfe of Orrenge
Tawney for the Weites Cootes

xxxvij^s

M^d that vpon the third daye of December Anno
sup^d dict M^r Maior cawsed the Statute for the Avoydinge
of vnlawful Games to be opponlye redd at the Heighe
Crosse in Leic to thend that the Inhabitants therein
maye refrayne y^e same [Hall Book, ii, p 302]

1579

Itm recē of Andrew Marsam, *virginal maker*, for his fredom

xs

Itm geven to therle of Darbyes pleyers
more then was geythered

iij^s iij^d

Itm geven to one Johnson & his ffellowe
w^{ch} have a Comīssyon to enqueueire of
unlawfull games etc

xxs

1580

Itm geven to two Berewards att M^r
Mayors dyn^l more then was gay-
thered

iij^s

Itm geven to one Johnson whoe hath the
Que^e Maiestyes Comīssyon for repress-
inge of unlawfull games & for the
maynenēce of Artillerye ffor that
he shoulde not deale wth in this Towne

xxs

1581

Common Hall held xvij february xxij Elizabeth
Item it is further agreed & appoynted that the xl^s w^{ch}
is alreadye gevon to one Johnson (who hathe the Penal-
tye for vnlawfull games & lacke of Artillerye gevon hym

by the Quenes Maiestye by her Co^mssyon) shalbe
leyvyed vppe agayne of the Ale howsses where vnlaw-
full games bee vsed, & other howsses wherein vnlaw[ful]
games be vsed, & of the offend^{os} therein [Hall Boar,
ii, p. 338]

Itm gevpon to the Quenes Maiest^s Beare-

wards vñ one Shawe & one other, more
then was gaythered

1111^s

Itim gevon to therle of Darbies players

xiii]^s

Common Hall held xvij^o November xxvij^o Elizabeth

It is agreed that frome henceforthe there shall not bee anye ffees or Rewards gevon by the Chamber of this Towne, nor anye of the xxiiij^u or xlviij^u to be charged wth anye payments ffor or towards anye Bearewards, Beearbaytings, Players, Playes, Entludes or Games, or anye of theym Except the Quenes Maiest or the Lords of the P^rvye Counsall, nor that anye Players bee suffred to playe att the Towne Hall (Except before except) & then butt onlye before the Mayor & his bretherne, vpon peyne of xl^s to be lost by the Mayor that shall suffer or doe to the contrye, to be Levyed by his successo^r, vpon peyne of v^{li} if he make default therein

Item it is agreed y^t eſſye Inhabiter or howſekeþ in Leicest^r (beinge of reasonable abylltye) ſhalbe taxed (att the diſcretion of M^r Mayor) what they ſhall Quarterlye geve to the Waytes towards the amendinge of there Lyvinge In conſyderacion whereof the ſaid Waytes shall kepe the Towne, and to playe eſſye night & morninge orderlye, boethe wynt^r & ſomer, and not to goe fōthe of the Towne to playe except to ffayres or weddings & then by the License of M^r Mayor

Itm that no estraungers vicz Wayets, mynstrells,

or other muzicōns whatsoeū, be suffered to playe wth in
this Towne, neyther att Weddings or ffayō tymes or
anye other tymes whatsoeū [Hall Book, ii, pp 362-3]

1582

Common Hall held xxijth february xxvth Elizabeth

Itm it is agreed and ordered that the xxiiijth shall
eūye of them geve xij^d a qter, and the xlviijth eūye
of them vj^d a qter to the Waytes for there Wages
and all other the Inhabitants in Leicestř to be taxed
by the Mayor, from tyme to tyme, what they shall eūye
of theym geve quarterlye to the sayd Weytes for
& towaids there Wages And that noe Strangers,
being mewzicōns or waytes or other ps ons whatsoeū
beinge either muzicōns or players although they doe or
shall dwell wth in the Towne of Leicestř, and bee not of
the Companye of the Town Waytes shall not be suffred
to play within the aforesaid Towne of Leicestř att anye
tyme or tymes in the yeare att or in a mans howsse, dore,
wyndow, or att anye Weddings or Bryde howsses, the
tyme of the Geſfall Assyses wth in the Towne of Leicestř
only excepted, and then to playe butt onlye to
straungers Provided allwayes that the said Town
Waytes shall keepe the Towne, & bothe evenyng and
mornynge contynullye & orderlye at Reasonable and
Season[able] tymes [Hall Book, ii, pp 365-6]

Itm Gevon to Bearewards this yere more

then was gaythered

xxiiij^s viij^d

Itm Gevon to Players this yere more then

was gaythered

xx^s

Itm gevon to the Earle of Darbies play-

eis more then was gaythered

xv^s

Itm geven to George Warde, Beareward

& the Erle of Huntingdons man, and

to one other, being S ^r Xpofer Hattons man & a bearward, at M ^r Mayors dynf ⁿ more then was gaythered	viij ^s
Itim geven to S ^r George Hastings Players	x ^s
Itim geven to the Quenes Maiesties	
Playos ¹ more then was gathered	xxxviiij ^s iiiij ^d

1583

Tuesday the third daie of miche, 1583,
certen playors whoe said they were the
Sunts of the Quenes Maiesties Master
of the Revells, who required lycence to
play & for there aucthoritye showed fōth
an Indenture of Lycense from one M^r
Edmonde Tylneye esquier M^r of her
Ma^{ts} Revells of the one pte, and George
Haysell of Wisbiche in the Ile of El^e
in the Couñ of Cambridge, gentlemā on
the other pte

The w^{ch} indenture is dated the vjth daie of februarye
in the xxvth yere of her Ma^{ts} raign &c

In w^{ch} Indenture there ys one article that all Justices,
Maiores, Sheriffs, Bayllyfs, Constables, and all other
her Officers, Ministers & subiects whatsoeū to be ayd-
inge & assi stinge vnto the said Edrund Tilneye, h^s
Deputies & Assignes, attendinge & havinge due regard
vnto suche parsons as shall diso deily intrude themselves
into any the doings & acçons before mencōned, not beinge
reformed qualifed & bound to the orders p̄sribed by the
said Edmund Tyllneye These shalbee therefore not

¹ See Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 254, for
particulars respecting the formation of this Company early in
the year in which this visit occurs Robert Wilson and
"Dick" Tarleton were members of it

only to signifie & geve notice vnto all & eſſy her ſaid Justices &c that noſt of there owne p̄tended auctoritye intrude themſelves & presume to ſhowe forth any ſuſche playes, enterludes, tragedies, comedies, or ſhewes in any places w̄th in this Realm, w̄thoute the ordlye allowance thereof vnder the hand of the ſayd Edmund

Nota No play is to bee played, but ſuſche as is allowed by the ſayd Edmund, & his hand at the latter end of the ſaid booke they doe play

The forſed Haysell is nowe the cheſe playor &c
[*Hall Papers*, vol 1, fol 42]

Fridaye the 6 of m̄che

Certen players caſt before M̄r Mayor at the Hall there beinge pſent M̄r John Tatā, M̄r George Tatā, M̄r Morton & M̄r Worſhip who ſaide they were the Farle of Wosters men who ſaide the forſyd playōſ were not lawfully auctorysed, & ȳt they had taken from them th̄ere coſtys, but it is untrue, for they forgot there box at the In in Leic, & ſo theſe men gat yt & they ſed the syd Haysell was not here hymſelf and ȳe ſent the ſame to Grantom to the syd Haysell who dwellithe there [Hall Papers, fol 38]

William Earle of Worcester &c hathe by his wrytinge dated the 14 of Januarye A° 25° Eliz R° licensed his ſunts v̄z Rob̄ Browne, James Tunſtall, Edward Allen, W̄m Harryſon, Tho Cooke, Rȳe Johnes, Edward Browne, Rȳe Andrewes to playe & goe abrode, uſinge themſelves orderly &c (in theiſe words &c) These are therefore to require all ſuſche her Highnes offycers to whom theſe p̄nts ſhall come, quietly & frendly w̄th in yoſ severall pſincts & Corporaçons to pmyt & ſuffer them to paſſe w̄th yoſ furtherance uſinge &

demeanynge y^{em}selves honestly & to geve them (the rather for my sake) suche intertaynement as other noble mens players haue (In Wytnes &c)

M^r Mayor M^r Ja Clarke M^r Rob^t Heyrycke
M^r Jo Heyrycke M^r George Tata M^r Ellys
M^r Noryce M^r Morton M^r Newcom^m

M^d that M^r Mayor did geve the aforesaid playōs an Angell towards there dīnī & wild them not to playe at this p̄sent being fryday the vjth of m̄che, for that the tyme was not conveynent

The forsaid playōs mett M^r Mayor in the strete nere M^r Newcomes housse, after the Angell was geven a bowte a ij howers, who then craived lycense ageyne to play at there Inn, & he told them they shold not, then they went away & seyd they wold play, whether he wold or not, & in dispite of hym, wth dyvers other evyll & contemptuous words Witnes hereof M^r Newcom^m M^r Wycam, & Willm Dethicke

More, these men, conþy to M^r Mayors comandm^t, went wth their drum & Trumppyts thorowe the Towne, in contempt of M^r Mayor, neyther wold com^m at his comandm^t, by his offycer, vz Worship

W^m Pateson my lord Harbards man }
Tho Powlton my lord of Worcesters man } these ij
were they w^{ch} dyd so much abuse M^r Mayor in the aforesayd words

Nota These seyd playōs have submytted them selves, & are sorye for there words past, & craved pdon, desyeringe his worship not to wryte to there M^r agayne them, & so vpon there submyssyn, they are lycensed to play this night at there Inn, & also they have pmySED that vpon the stage, in the begynnyng of there play, to shoe vnto the hearers that they are licensed to playe by

M^r Mayor & wth his good will & that they are sory for the words past [Hall Papers, vol 1, fo 38]

M^d that vpon fridaye the xixth of Julye 1583, there should have bene a Com^m Hall, at wth tyme there dyd mee but only these psons vnderwrytten of the b^retherne, vi^z M^r Mayor, M^r Manbye, M^r Heyricke, M^r Tatam, M^r James Clarke, M^r Rob^t Heyricke, M^r George Noryce, M^r Chettle, M^r Vyllers, and of the xlviijth, these vi^z John Byddle, one of the Chamblins, Thomas Wylne, Richard Orton, & Lebyas Chamblin, By whom yt was agreed that the Muzic^{ans}, M^r Gryffyns S^rvunts should be admitted & appoyned the Towne Waytes And so have suche wages or sallarye as the Towne Waytes heretofore have had, &c And it was then ordred that the Collers should bee delyued vnto them, takinge of e^thy of them two Townesmen for pledges for there Collers

Rob ^t Rodes, C ^o veyso ^r	Pledges for George
W ^m Grene, Tayllo ^r , theld ^r	Ridgley his Coll ^o
Rob ^t Carter	Pledges for Thom ^s Paynar for
Rolland Bridgma ^r	the second Coll ^o

John Heyricke, Tayllo ^r	Pledges for boethe the
Rob ^t Noryce, Corveyso ^r	aforesaid ptyes for the
	thirde Coll ^o

[Hall Book, ii, p 369]

Common Hall, held xxijth November xxvjth Elizabeth
It is agreed that the Waytes & there boyes shall have Cotes bought them & ij skutchyns or sincke fyles to be made for the Boyes to were wth laces aboute there necks [Hall Book, p 378]

Itm paid for clothe for the Weytes &
Biddells Cootes

xlviij^s

Itm paid more for two elnes of cloth for
cootes for the weites Boyes xx^s

1584

Common Hall held xijth March, xxvjth Elizabeth

It is Ordered that the Waytes shall have frome henceforth xij^d a quart^r of the xxvijth, and vj^d a qt^r of the xlviijth, besydes the Comeners & Inhab'tants, and not to goe forthe of the Towne to playe wthoute Lycense, neither anye straungers to be suffred to playe wthin the Towne [Hall Book, ii, p 382]

Itm gevon to the Quenes Maiest^s players
more then was gaythered the laste of
September

xv^s viij¹

Itm gevon to George Warde, the Earle
of Huntingdons man and Bearewarde,
more then was gaythered

xij^s

Itm geven to the Lorde Vawse¹ his
Bearwarde

iiij^s iiiij⁴

1585

Itm geven to the Queenes Ma^{ties} Beare-
warde

x³

Itm geven to Therle of Leycest^r his
playars more than was gathered

xxvij^s

Itm Given to George Warde, the Beare-
warde, servante to the Earle of Hun-
tingdon more than was gathered

iiiij^s

Itm given to the Lorde Chamberlens and
the Lord Admiralls² playors more
then was gathered

iiiij^s

¹ Vaux See Collier, vol iii, p 439, note, for a notice of this nobleman's players

² Howard, Earl of Nottingham Chalmers says that these

1586

xij^o die Octobi Anno regni Dñe Eliz-
abeth Reȝ &c xxvij^o Coram Jacobo
Ellys, Maiore ville Leic Jacobo Clark et
Willm Morton Justiȝ Pac &c
The sayings or Examynacōn of certen
psons as followeth &c

Charrolls Dubignom beinge demanded where he was,
& howe he bestowd hym self on Michellamas even last,
saythe he dothe not rememb̄ he was any where but in
his M^{rs} howsse, & if he were, he cam̄ whom either
that night, or some other night thereabowts, aboue 8
or 9 of the clock at night, & willed to have his supp,
at w^{ch} tyme his M^r caused his wyef to geve to this
examynate ij or ij Rawe eggs & badd hym rost them,
where vpon he, the said exā, dyd throwe the said eggs
awaye, &c

Itm he saythe that he hard the Imbroderer saye that
yf the Quene of Scotts were put to deathe (as yt was
supposed she should be), than there was lyke to bee
verye greate trobles in England, and that if there were
any suche hurly burly¹ then yt wold goe hard wth the
strangers nowe in England And further he saythe that
the said Edwarde Sawforde said vnto hym that Marlyn
saythe in his booke, that after suche trobles ended, then
yt wold bee a pleasant golden worlde & further he
saith the said Sawforde said unto hym yf there were
not p̄sent Remedy this pliment for the Relefe of the
pore, he dyd suppose the Coīmons² wold ryse, or greate

players began to act at *The Rose*, on the 14th of May, 1594,
and that in 1598 Robert Shaw and Thomas Downton were at
the head of the company

¹ Upoar, tumultuous stir see "Macbeth," act 1, sc 1

² The common people

syn wold bee and that mlyns pvyse was that trobles should cum abowte Wyndsour & then this examynate asked the sed Sawforde howe he knewe this, & wheyther he had the sed mlyns booke & he said, no, but he hard yt of a verye frend of hys, and that the boke was in Yorkshire emongst ye

Released att y^e Gefall Gaole delyūſe &c [Hall Pa-
pers, 1, fol 182a]

These be the Wordes of W^m Byarde

In the Raygne of E shall men be breeched lyke beares and coated lyke apes, and y^t after michellmas should a parlement be houlden, where vnto many should come of the noble men, and some not come, and they that did come to the parlement should coīnon¹ of such matters as they come for, & not agree, in so much as they shall fall at square, and some blowes shall be geuen, and so should parte everye man to his home, then should they goo together on the eares wthin themselves, in so much her Majestie should be in such feare y^t she should flie into Walles, Then should the enime aproche the lande, and profer in manye places, and where he profered most to meane leaste to enter, but at West Chester thenimie shoulde enter and envade the lande, and the crowne wonne and loste once or twice, then should such as have racked rentes and wronged the poore and horded up their corne, go to the post,² and three battles foughte, one at Westchester, the other at Coventrie, the third at London Then should a man and a boye be plowinge, and shall se a man clothed in blacke, bare-headed, runyng over the feeld, the boy shall say, "M^r,

Commune

² Or, as we now say, go to the *wall*

who is yonder?" The M^r shall say, "A Pryste, let vs kille him, for it is they y^t have broughte all this troble" Then in ther greatest trouble should a ded man come, and after his name be knowne, all shall rune vnto hym, he shall geue vnto everye man his owne wyfe and land, and shall set foare rullers in the land, then shall he go forthe and conquer, and never cease till he com^t att Jeruselem, and there dy by the will of God and be bueried betwene the three Kyngs of Cullin¹

By me Edward Sawford

At y^e geſtall Gaole delyſtly found guiltye by y^e Graunde Jurye for conſylyng the words, yett sett at Lyſtie, payinge his ffees [Hall Papers, 1, fol 183]

When men are brekyd² lyke bares & cotelde lyke apes, and wemen pentyd lyke Images to behoulde great pryd & lechere In yong & oulde greate taulke of God & no delle survyd, nor none of hys lawes almoste regardyd, fayth & honest^y moste hatyd, with flattarey abondantley, caryeth awaye the vectorey, but God of hys omnypotency, wyl not so delludyd be

Wyllm Byard

Comytted to the Gaole by the Judge at the Assises vntill he put in good Baylle [Hall Papers, 1, fol 185]

As I was in comonycation wth Edward Sawford of things wth I had red in books, as cronicles, and the reward of iniquitie, and other such like, both pleasant and good to passe the tyme wthall, he told me that he had red the boke of K Arthur, wth he said was a pleasant boke of fables as ever he red in his lyfe then began to talke of Marlyn, saying that he was a man that had

¹ Cologne

² Breeched

foretould many things to comⁱ, yea, even to the Worlds end The w^{ch} I hearing, I desired to know what this Marlyn was, and what he had sayd The aforesayd Edward Sawford sayd that Marlin lyved in K Arthurs days, and also foretould K Arthur his death, w^{ch} also came to passe forther that this Marlin was, as it were, a congerer, and loved a lady to whom he taught his science, and yet this lady loved him not, and by the same connyng that she had learned of him she inclosed him into a stone, and thus the sayd Merlen dyed These wordes being ended I asked Edward Sawford what Marlyn had forsayd of things to come, sayth he, that there should be a man and his boy at the plow, and there should a man clothed in black, and bare head, run over the feeld, and that the boy seing him should say, M^r lo where roneli a man in black, I think he be a preest then his maister should say, comⁱ, let us go and kil him, for it is they that hath put this World to this stay as it is, furthermore that claobs¹ and clooted showes² should rise and also that there should be an ould man lying on a hil after the trobles past, behoulding the World, and should wish him yong agayne, that he myght be a partaker of the goulden days to cumⁱ further that there should be a many that should seeke the death of our noble Quene, but none should preveale nor abridg her days, but that she should lyve tyl God should other wyse cal her Thus much he mayd no difference² at al to tel me, neyther could he [tell] me any more at that tyme, but wth in fore days after he told me that there should be a parlement held, the w^{ch} sayth he, must be the next of al, at the w^{ch}, being asembled, they should common³ of such matters that there should

¹ Shoes² Hesitation or difficulty³ Commune

be discord and som blose geven in the parliament house, and so should the parlement be broken and every man retorne to his home, and then must the broyle begin, and al in such a troble that the Quenes grace shalbe forced to fly into Wayls for her safgard, then shall the dead man com and restore to euerye one his owne wif and his land, and set al at quiet and I asked him what this dead man meant, or what he was, and he said he knew not whether it was King Edward the Syxt or King Arthur these be dangerous words, sayth he, to be spoken vnless it be to a specyal frend, as I know thou art to me, therefore keepe them secret, for if thou reveale them I wil deny them for they be dangerous It was an ould man of the town w^{ch} tould me this, and shortly after ould Byard came thither and sat him downe and began to speake of congerers and the deceat of the devel, very good words at the first, but afterwards he began to speake agaynst the preachers of gods word and said that they kept a great pratylyng, and that he himself had disputed agaynst som of them, and tould them to their faces that they belyed them of the ould relygion, for, sayth he, they mayd other gates sermons than are mayd now a days, for they spoke of such pithy maters that they made the people soe zealous that they made them waxe, neither did they cloy the people wth them, but gave the people few, and then they were atentyve to heare them, also talked he of monkes and nuns, w^{ch} talk, to myne opynyon, is not fit heere to be rehearsed, also cursed the Crumwels,¹ and sayd ther

¹ The possessions of the dissolved religious house at Launde, in this county, came into the family of Cromwell, Earl of Essex, whose son and successor lies buried in the chapel of the abbey, now part of the mansion of Edward Finch Dawson, Esq. The Cromwells were thus well known in this neighbourhood

were never any good of them, for it was a Cromwel that was cause that the abbeys were put done, and soe it came of him, sayth he And after he had done I asked him wherefore they caused the pore people to say there prayers in lattin the w^{ch} they vnderstand not he mayd awnser that the pope, the hed of the church, dwelt in the lattin tonge, wher al speak lattin, the pson¹ and al, therefore he would that al should serve God in his speach, and sayd it was not materyal in what tonge we speake for God vnderstandeth al tongs Tl en I asked why they make the people to pray to our La, qy, he gave me answer in a place, w^{ch} I have forgotten, in the biginung of the gospel after S^t Luke I sayd tl at is not sufficient, for that is but a salutatyon of the angel Gabriel, stil he stock to her, saying she had not bene kept wth such meat and drynk as others wear I told him that was not in the scripture, and I gave him a many reasons of scripture as God put into my myna, w^{ch} when he hard, he toke his leave and went his way and when he was gone I asked Edward Sawford if that it was not he that had told him al these things aboue writen, and he said, I it be, and I sayd I thought so as soon as I hard him talk

By me, Charles Dubignon [*Hall Papers, 1*, fol 186]

xiii^o die Octob^r 1586, before James Ellys, Mayor, ffraunces Browne esq, one of the Justics of peace for the Countye of Leicest^r, James Clarke & Thomas Clark, Justics of Peace for the Towne of Ley^c The Examynacō of certayne psons, as well of the Towne as of the Countreye, as followeth

¹ Parson

Willm Byarde he denyethe the fyrist poynt of Sawfords Examynacō He sayth he never redd any of Marlyns pvizies¹

Itm he denyeth that eū he said there shold be a pleyament holden after Mighellmas

The said Byard vterlye denyeth all the sayings or accusacōn of the said Sawford ageynst hym

Itm he saythe he cannott tell wheyther he talked wth hym of pleyaments or not, & neyther can tell when he was att the said Sawfords howsse

SAWFORDE

he saithe that the said Byard hath bene half a dozen tymes at his howsse & that he was there yesterdaye

BYARD

he saythe he hathe Boathe Readd & hard pvyses Also he saythe that he dyd once rede or els hard that men shold be breched lyke beares & coated lyke apes, & women paynted lyke Images

The forsayd Byard at the Gaole delyūye found gyltye for speakeinge the words he is charged wthall by Sawford & by the Judge sent for from the Gaole of the Countye and Comyntted to the Gaole of the Towne, for further answeringe of the said words But order left, that yf he offer good suerties to be bound in xx^{li} apece, & hym self in xl^{li} to be bound to appye att the next Assices &c that than he to be Baylled, or else to Lye stylle in pryson

Dethyck [Hall Papers, 1, fol 184]

Itm given to the Queens Ma^{ties} Playors
more then was gathered

xxiiij^s

¹ Prophecies

Itm given to the Earle of Essex playors
in Reward being not suffered to play
at the hall

xx^s

1587

Itm geven to the Lorde Admyralls playors more than was gaythered	iiijs
Itm geven to George Warde, Bearewarde more than was gaythered	iijs
Itm geven to the Countys of Sussex playors	xx ^s
Itm geven to the Erle of Leycesters playors more then was gaythered	xvij 1 j ^d
Itm the xx th of June payed for iiij Gallons of Wyne x ^s viij ^d , iiij ^{lb} of Sugar v ^s , and iiij dossen of Cakes iijs, geven to S ^r George Hastings and dyvers other Gentlemen at the Cockinge	xvij viij ^d
Itm the 16 of Julye geven to the Erle of Essex playors more than was gathered	x ^s
Itm geven to the Queenes Maiesties playors more than was gaythered	xvi j
Dekajes and Moneye not Payed to the Charitlyrs —	—
Itm Chrystopher Alysaunder behynde for certen playes and a beare beating	v ^d
Itm John Norrand for the lyke	iiij ^d
Itm geven to George Warde Bearewarde more than was gathered	iiij ^s

1588

Itm geven to S^r George Hastings players
more ther was gaythered

iijs

Itm geven the vjth daye of November to
certen of her Maiests playars more
then was gaythered

x^s

Itm the xvijth of November gevon to
George Warde, beareward, more
than was gaythered

ij^s ij^d

1589

Itm the xvijth of ffebruarye gevon in
Rewarde to the Earle of Sussexe
playars who were not suffered to playe

xx^s

Itm the xxth of Maye payed to others
moe of her Mayestyes playars more
than was gaythered

x^s viij^d

Itm gevon to M^r Skevington, then Highe
- Sheryff, and dyvers other gentlemen
wth hym at a greate Beare beating then
had, a gallon of Wyne, a pound of
suger, and Tenne shillings in golde

xiiij^s iiiij^d

Itm geven to George Warde, the Beare-
ward, more than was gaythered

iiij^s

Itm the xixth of Nove[n]m geven to therle
of Sussex pleyers in Reward, not
playinge

x^s

1590

Itm geven to two Muzicōns beinge Sunts
to the Earle of Essex

ij^s

Itm geven to certen playars, playinge
uppon ropes at the Crosse Keys, more
than was gaythered

xxviiij^s iiiij^d

Receipts towards the Charges of the Gifts gevon to
Noblemen Playors —

Inprimis, Receyved att the Hall dore the	
xxx th day of October, the Queenes	x ^s
Ma ^{ts} playors then playinge	
Itm recē att the hall dore, the Earle of	
Wosters playors then playinge	vjs viij ^a
Itm recē att the hall dore, the Earl of	
Hartfords ¹ playors then playinge	vjs viij ^c
Itm recē of John Underwood, the	
Mayors Sgiant, whiche was by him	
recē of the Mayors Bretherne for vj	
playes and one Beyre baytinge	xliij ^s
Itm recē more of the xlviij ^t for the same	
playes and Beyre baytinge	xlviij ^s
Total v ^l xv ^s iiiij ^d	

Itm the xxx of October gevon to the	
Queenes Maies ^{ts} Pleyars, by the apo-	
poyntment of M ^r Mayor and his	
bretherne	xl ^s
Itm gevon to the Earle of Wosters	
playars, by the appoyntment of M ^r	
Mayor and his Bretherne	xx ^s
Itm gevon to George Warde, Bearewarder,	
by Appoynment of M ^r Mayor and	
his Bretherne	x ^s
Itm the xxij th of November geven to	
the Earle of Hartfords playors by the	
appoynmt aforesaid	xx ^s

¹ Chalmers first mentions this Company under the year 1592
He says "they have left few materials for the theatrical remembrancer"

1591

Itim the xxvjth of June geven to the Earle of Wosters Playors by the appoynptment of M^r Mayor and his bretherne

xx^s

Itim the xjth of Auguste geven to the Earle of Sussex Playors by the appoynptment of M^r Mayor and his Bretherne

xxxij^s iiiij^d

Itim geven to the Queens Ma^{ts} Playors, being another Companye, called the Children of the Chappell,¹ by the appoynptme^t of M^r Mayor and his bretherne

xxvj^s viij^d

Itim gevon to the Lorde Darkars² playors in reward, w^{ch} were not suffered to playe

ij^s vj^d

Itim gevon to the Lorde Shandowes³ playors, more than was gaythered

vj^s viij^d

Itim geven to the Earle of Worsters Playars in Rewarde, for that they did not playe

x^s

1592

Itim the xth of June geven to the lord Dakers, Vicepresident of York, his Playors, who did not playe

v^s

Itim gevon to the Queenes Ma^{ts} Playors more than was gaythered

xl^s

¹ This was one of the companies of juvenile actors, of whose popularity complaint is made in "Hamlet"

² Dacres ("of the North," baron of Gilsland and Graystock)

³ Chando^s

Itm̄ geven to George Warde, Beareward, more than was gathered	iii ^s
Itm̄ the 19 of Decemb̄i geven to the Lorde Admiralls Playars more than was gathered	viiij
Itm̄ geven to the Lorde Mountague his Playars	v ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Pembrucke ¹ his playars more than was gaythered	xiiiij ^s

1593

Itm̄ the xj th of June p ^d to the Queenes Ma ^{ts} playars more than was gaythered	xxiiij ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Lorde Darsye his playars	x ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Wōsters playars	xx ^r
Itm̄ geven to the Queenes Ma ^{ts} playars more then was gaythered	x ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Wosters playors who did [not] playe	xx ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Erle of Darbyes playois who d.d playe	v ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Lorde Sandwedge players, who did not playe	v ^s

1594

Emanuel

Itm̄ recē of the Companye of the Eight and ffortye towards the payment of the rewarde to playars, at ij tymes	xv ^s viij ^d
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¹ According to Chalmers, the Earl of Pembroke's servants (who, he says, "were more desirous of profit, than emulous of praise") began to play at *The Rose*, on the 28th of October, 1600.

Itm recē of the Companye of the ffoure and twentye towards the paymente of the rewarde to playors at ij tymes	xyjs
Itm geven to the Lorde Morlyes ¹ players, who were not suffered to playe	v ^s
Itm geaven to the Lorde Mounte Eagle his players, at two tymes	vij ^s iiij ^d

1595

Itm geven the Gentlemen att the Cock- inge, and at the Cockepitt, in Wyne and Suger, Cherries, Cakes and Bread	xxjs iiijd
Itm geaven to the Earle of Wosters players	xxx ^s
Itm geavon to the Queenes Maesties - players	xls
Itm geaven to George Warde Beare- warde	x ^s
Itm geau[n] to the Collectors for the Towne of Stratforde vpon Haven, in regarde of there Losse by ffyar	xiijs iiijd
Itm paide for vj yards and three quarters of Tawnye Clothe for ffive Cotes for the Waytes att x ^s vj ^d the yarde	ijl ^l x ^s x ^d
Itm geven to George Warde, Beare- warde, in reward	vs
Itm geven to the Queenes Ma ^{ts} playars, more than was gaythered	xjs

¹ See note in Appendix to A.D. 1547. This was Edward Lord Morley and Monteagle, the son and successor of the Henry Parker, Lord Morley there mentioned. He died in 1622, having married Elizabeth, sole daughter and heiress of William Lord Monteagle, to whose title he also succeeded.

Itm geven in reward to the Lord Chan-
does Players, whoe did not playe att
the hall

v^s

1596

Itm geven to the Earle of Worcest^os
play^os the first of August, in Rewarde,
who did not playe att the Hall

vj^s viij^d

Itm payed to m^r Thomas Chettell for
vij yards of Tawny clothe for the
Wayts Coats and the Byddles cote

iiij^h xiij^s

Itm rece^e of John Vnderwood, w^{ch} hee
before had receyved of the xxiiij^h,
towards two plays

xv

Itm geven to the Earle of Darby his
playars more than was gaythered

xx^s

Itm geven to the Earle of Huntingdon
playars more than was gathered

xix^s iiiij^d

Itm geven to the Queenes Maiests
Play^os more than was gathered

xxx^s

1598.

Itm the ixth of Januarie geven to the
Queenes Maiest^s Playars more than
was gaythered

xiij^s v^a

Itm p^d to M^r Thomas Chettell, Woollen
Drap^o for viij yards & iiij quarters of
Tawnye Brode Clothe for the Wayts
Cotes & the Bidles Cote

v^h xiij^d

Itm geven to the Earle of Darbys
playars

x^s

Itm to my Lorde Barkeleys playars

x^s

Itm geven to the Erle of Penbrucke his
players in Rewarde w^{ch} played att the
Towne Hall and the Company payde
nothinge

xiij^s iiiij^d

1599

Villa Leic^c The sayings of Accusation of Josua Johnson and of Rychard Moseley, of the new Hospitall in the Towne of Leyc^c, the first daye of June A^o r^{ne} Elizabeth nūc &c, xl^{mo} Before Thomas Clarke, Maior of the Towne of Leicest^r, Willm^m Morton, & Thomas Nixe, Justices of the Peace of ð Souaigne Ladye the Queen, within the said Towne & Libties thereof, ageynst Richard Woodshawe of Leic^c aforesaid, shoomaker

Josua Johnson saythe, that yesterdaye in the fforenoone, he hard Rychard Woodshawe of the Towne of Leic^c, shoomaker, speake these words followinge vicz
 That yf wee do lyve, we shall wthin theise sixe yeares, see other gates¹ daunesinge & mayinge than is nowe, and further said the preacher was a Liar, for that, in his Smond, he said M^r Maior cawsed a May pole to bee taken doun & cutt in peeces, the said Maye pole was peeced & sett vppe ageyne, w^{ch} was not true, for that it was not peesed, but that part w^{ch} was left was sett vppe ageyne

Rychard Moseley sayth that he hard the said Woodshawe saye, that yf wee do Lyve these sixe yeares, we shall see other gates dawnesinge in the Towne, than there ys nowe

WOODSHAWE

The said Rychard Woodshawe beinge examyned and demanded whatt Wordes hee spake yesterdaye in

¹ *Other gates*, in another manner —HALLIWELL

the Newe Hospitall, answereth and saith that he said that within these sixe yeaies itt maye bee therre will bee more morrys Dawnsinge in the Towne

Thomas Clarke, Major

W^m Morton [*Hall Papers*, vol 11, fol 54]

The Names of y^e Moreys Dawnsers on Tuesday night in Whitson Weeke last, vicz

- 1 Rob^t Turpin, Sunt to G Greene,
- 2 Rychard Brewan, Sunt to John ffreake,
- 3 Rychard Awmond, Thom^s Pares man,
- 4 W^m Salesburye, Svant to W^m Hunt, baker,
- 5 Edward Cheyney, Svant to Nic^s Birkitt the Curry^o,
- 6 and Rychard Woodshawe, shoomaker theyr Accuzar

[*Hall Papers*, fol 55]

The Generall Gaole delyverie was holden uppon Thursdaye the xxvjth daye of Julye Anne• xl^o Elizabes Regine, before bothe the Judges, vicz Edmund Anderson, Knight, and John Glanvile, Justi^d of Assises and generall gaole delyverie [*Hall Papers*, vol 11, fol 65]

To the Righte Honourable the Lorde Judge

Moste humbly complayninge vnto y^o good Lordeship y^o poore orat^o Richard Woodshawe of the toune of Leicester, shomaker, so it is, most honourable lorde, that at Whitsontide laste paste, M^r Maior gave leaue vnto dyvers younge men of the said toune to feche in a Maye Pole, and to set vp the same in the said toune, which they dyd, with shott and Morris dauncers, but how his worship was Incenced presently so sone as the said maie pole was set vp he caused yt to be poled dounne agayne, and for that y^o pore orat^o saide that within

these six yeres he hoped to see more moris daunsinge
 then euer he had seene, for that he hurde one M^r Hunter
 saye that when he cam to be Maiore of Leicester,
 he wolde alow a morrisse, beinge oute of sarvis tyme,
 where vpon, and for the saide speeches so vsed, yō
 poore oratō, not menyng any hurt there in, was by M^r
 Maiore bound ouer vnto the Assyse to aunswere the
 same before yō Lordeship Maiestie, therefore, please
 yō good Lordeship to graunte yō poore oratō yō graciouſe
 favō it that behalfe that he maiest be releced of the
 saide bondes vpon his juste triall, and in so doinge yō
 poore oratō shall be bounde to prae to God for the
 longe lyſe of yō good Lordeshipp [Hall Papers,
 vol 11, fol 67]

Item the xxij of June geven to the Lord Darsies Playars, who did not playe	x ^s
Item paid for vij yards of tawnye brode clothe for the Waytes Cotes, at ix ^s	
the yarde	iiij ^{lii} iiij ^s
Item recē of the xxvij ⁱⁱ Aldermen for & towards the paymēt of sixe Playes	xvj ^s
Item recē of the xlviij ⁱⁱ for & towards the paym ^t of vj plays	xl ^s vj ^d
Item geven to the Erle of Darbyes ¹ players the xvij th of October	xx ^s
Item geven to the Earle of Lyncolnes Playars more then was gaythered	x ^s
Item geven to the Lorde Haywards Playars more then was gaythered	xvij ^s viij ^d

¹ The head of this Company, at the time of their visit, was Robert Brown, to whom Slye devised, in 1608, his share in the Globe —CHALMERS

Itm geven to the Lord Morleys Playars who did not playe	x ^s
Itm geven to a Beareward at M ^r Mayors feaste	v ^s

19^o of September '99

Abraham Clarke saythe that hee, Rychard Wales, Edward Boyleson, Bartholl Bond, playde at the bords, and called the Shovell-a-borde,¹ in Ry^c Rydyngs howsse & he lost aboue viij^d in Ale & further he saythe that Choyse came in & dyd drynk wth them, but dyd not stay And further he saythe this was of Sayturdaye night, the viijth of September last, & it was aboue xj of the clock before he was in his bedd

Also he saythe he borrowed xij^d of Rychard Inge, the said Saturdaye night

The said Rychard Inge saythe he dyd lend the said Abraham Clarke the same night, xij^d

The said Rychard Inge hath p^{ym}ysed to pay his fyne, w^{ch} is 10^s to morrow by ix in the forenone at the Town Hall

The aforesaid Abraham Clarke released [Hall Papers, vol 11, fol 79 *in dorso*]

1600

Itm geven to the Queenes Ma ^{ts} Playars more then was geythered	xxx ^s
Itm geven to the Earle of Huntingdon his pleynars more than was gaythered	xxx ^s
Itm p ^d to the Earle of Penbrocks players more then was gathered	xvij ^s
Itm geven to the Earle of Huntingdon his Players the second tyme	xx ^s

¹ See "Merry Wives of Windsor," act 1, sc 1

Itm̄ geven to the Lorde Dudleys Pleyars vj^b viij^d
 Itm̄ geven to thearle HuntingdonsPlayars xxvj^s viij^d

1601

Itm̄ geven to the Earle of Lincolns players more then was gaythered	xiiijs ^s vj ^d
Itm̄ given to a Bearewarde att M ⁱ Mayors Dinner	x ^s
Itm̄ given to the Lorde Dudleys Players	x ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Eaile of Huntingdon his Playars	xxx ^s
Itm̄ geven to Lorde Shandoes Playars	x ^s
Itm̄ given to the Lorde Ivers his Playars	xx ^s
Itm̄ given to the Lorde Vawce his Playars	x ^s
Itm̄ payd to the Goldsmythe for mend- inge the Wayts Collors or Chaynes, and the olde Towne Mace	xijjs ^s iij ^d
Itm̄ p ^d for ix yards of Tawnye Clothe for the Waytes Cotes & for the Bea- dells Cote for Lynyng for the same Cote	iij ¹¹ xij ^s

Saturdaye the 21 of Novemb^r, 1601

This is to let your Worships vnderstand y^t I am
wyllinge to fullfill all your mindes and to put vp all
Ingres¹ of and this on him more, hoppinge it shall be y^e
last In this sorte a cordinge to his one part, y^t his
sonne to play the base, and his father his olde part, y^e
trebell, and so to be *just sync* (?) our first stint, and
the first boye to play one quartur his, and the next
myne, as long, wth this exception, both who is wanting
wthout reasonable cause at any time, and will not give

¹ Injuries

his attendance, having sufficient notice, shall lose his place, and so, iff I might intret those y^t are here in presaunce to be witnes at this agreement I hope it will content you

Tomas Poyner

[Afterwards signed by] Georg Ridgley

Sundaye, the xxij of Novem^r 1601

Yf George Ridgeley subscribe likewise to this agree^t then I will they contynew their places for ð Waghts, & that this agreement be entred as an order of the laste Com^{on} Hall, yf not that they p^sently yield their collars to my deputie

Willm Rowes, Major [Hall Papers]

1602

At a Common Hall, held on S^t Matthew's Day, Waytes 1602, The Waytes, because they can not agree together, are therefore now dysmyssed from beinge the Towne Waytes from henceforth

Dethicke [Hall Book, iii, p 232]

Itm Recē of the ij Companyes for sefull

Playes xix^s vj^d
first given the laste daye of Septem^r
(1602) to the Queenes Ma^ts Playars xl^s

1603

At a Common Hall held on the 28th January 1602

Waites, ex parte } It is ordered and agreed that
George Ridgley } George Ridgley and his Companye
(beinge fyve in the wholl) be from
henceforth (vpon his good behavio^r) admitted the Town
Waits, havinge a lawfull and sufficient Companye
skilfull in the knowledge & arte of Muzicke, and shall

have for their Wages quarterly of the xxijth v^d a peece, and of the xlviijth quarterly ij^d a peece, and of the other Inhabitants and Commyners what they in kindenes & good will will give him and his said Companye, And to be paid att our Ladye Day next, as due for a quarter then ended [Hall Book, iii, p 241]

Itm p ^d for j gallon of Sacke & one pownde of Suger gevон to the Gentlemen at the horsse Runynge	v ^s	viiij ^d
Itm given the third of Aprill ¹ to the Earle of Huntingdon his players	xxvj ^s	viiij ^d
Itm given to the Earle of Worcesterors playōs	x ^s	
Itm given to the Earle of Worcesterors playōs one other tyme	xx ^s	
Itm given to the Lorde Admyralls playōs ² the xvij th of August	x ^s	
Itm given to the Kings Druīō	ij ^s	
Itm p ^d for a gallonde of Sacke & ij gal- lons of Clarett given to S ^r Thom ^r Griffyn, S ^r W ^m ffau ^t & other gentlem ^m att the Angell, at the horsse Runynge	ix ^s	iiiij ^d
Itm then gyven to the same gentlemen ij ^{l¹} of Suger	ij ^s	iiiij ^d
Itm given to the Lorde Shandoes Playars	xx ^s	
Itm geven to the Earle of Huntingdons Playars	xxx ^s	

¹ This performance consequently took place on a Sunday

² Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyne were at the head of this company, "Edward Allen, servaunte to the lorde Admyrall," had a warrant dated 22 April, 1603, for £30 for performances before the late Queen. Soon afterwards he became the "Prince's Servant"

Itm̄ geven to the Lorde Evers Playars xx³

Right Ho my humble
Lp to be advertized that
Ho^r nephew S^r Henry Hastings
behalfe of yo^r Lps brother
was spoyled, stolne, & cut up & brought to

to the Stewards of the faire in their
night Nowe so it was, may yt please yo^r good Lp
standinge there was the same night many Maye poles
hand and confused multitude of base people sett vp
Stewards watch too weak to suppress the eourage
And vpõ the Sabeth day everie

a Maypole was sett vp near vnto
in Leicⁱ I found I think at

wth a most tumultuous vproare & outcrie, vntill Sir
Willm̄ Skipwth came in, and dealinge somewhat rough-
ly, and layeing hold of one Wood, a butcher, a most
disorderlye, leude pson, brought hym to me, whom I
psentlye comittēd some rude audience
for pclamaçon of departure w^{ch} was then contemned
and seconded the next day wth Morrices and a great
number of Idle, rude companie, many of them armed
with shot, followinge them, morninge & eveninge, the
wholle towne throwe out where of I thought it my doutie
to advertize yo^r Lp humblie craving yo^r Lps assistance,
countenance & direction

[To the Right Honourable [James Ellice, Maior]
The Earl of Huntingdon, &c]

[*Hall Papers*, vol xxi]

Burgus Leic^t The sayings of Willm Saunderson of the old Hospitall of the Neworke of Leicester, Beadsman, taken before James Ellice, Maior of the Borough of Leices^t and Robte Gylott, Justices of the Peace theire, the fourth daie of Maye 1603

The said Examⁿ sayth comynge towards Symon Yngs dore in Leicester, found dyvers women sitting theire vppon Sayturdaye nighte the last of Aprill last past, Symon Ynge then rageinge at the settinge vpp of the Maye pole standinge neire to his howse in the Sowthe gate, and sayde that they (meyninge the Maye Poles) weare suffered in noe towne but here in Leic^t Wherevnto this Examⁿ said, that yf the King did allow of them, then wee ought not to gaine saye itt The Kinge, sayd he (the said Symon Ynge), I will obey Queene Elizabeth her lawes Then sayde this Examⁿ the Queene is dead, and that her lawes were nowe the Kings lawes Then the said Symon Ynge answered againe & said that the Kinge had noe lawes Then said this Examⁿ to him, Take heede what you saye, for feyre of punyshment, for hath not our King made manye Knights by lawe, and sent out his wrytts by lawe, and made twoe peeces of Scotyshe quoyne currant heire in England, and all by lawe Willm Saunderson

The said Willm Saunderson bound in α^{h} to give such evydence as he can & knoweth against the said Symon Ynge att the genall gaole delyverye to be holden att Lecest^r [Hall Papers]

RIGHT HONORABLE

In all humyllytie my dutie remembred, &c I crave pardon of your good L^p for my lounge sylence, w^{ch} to your Ho might seeme to bee my greate necl-

gence, especially beinge soe honorable and worthilye directed and advised in a matter of suche consequence and greate importance, but the trueth and reason thereof hath beene that I might the more effectuallie searche fourth, and the more certeynelye informe yo^r Ho^r of the pryncipall offenders and cheife agents, as well Abettors as Actors in the late tumultuous disturbance of oure peaceable goūment in this Corpora-çon, of whose names I have made a shorte Cathologue, and do presume herein to present the same to yo^r Lp humblie beseechinge yo^r Hono^r that such exemplēi punyshm^t maye bee inflicted vppon them that others maye bee terryfied to offendere hereafter in the like

And whereas, righte honorable, theire is a reporte suggested that myselfe shoulde since that tyme give countenance vnto the Morrice dauncers, whoe soe disorderlye did assemble themselves togeyther, I doe assure yo^r Honor, that itt is, and hath beene, farr from me and my affection, for, to my grief, I see dayelie thefte sett vpp before my eyes, tumulte and confuzion vphoulden and vnpunyshed, and both former and present governm^t disgraced I have therefore made my complaynte (beinge the moueth of all my Breetherne), and I have prayed in ayde of yo^r Honors greate and honorable place of Leivetenancye, humblie desyringe yo^r Lps strength to be added to my weakness, w^{ch} I confesse, yett shall yo^r Honor ever finde me willinge and readie in my place to further his Ma^{ts} Svice, soe far as eyther Lyfe, goods, or will can extende vnto

And, therefore, so soon as I shall receave warrant and order for takinge downe theise stolne Poles, and to doe otherwise as to yo^r Honors wisdome shalbe thought fitt, my diligence in speedye execution there of shall well appeyre

So humblie cravinge pdon, I humblie likewise take
my leave

Leicester, this xjth of Maye, 1603

Youre Honors humble to coīaund
James Ellice, Maior

To the right Honorable, my very good Lorde the
Earle of Huntingdon, Lorde Lievetenant of his High-
nes Countyes of Leicester and Rutland Be Theise D D

[*Hall Book*]

Burgus Leicester The Names of the Morrice
Dauncers, vicz

Willm Johnson ſvant to M^r Hugh Hunter

Thomas Cley, Tayllor,

Willm Salesbury, baker,

John York, Whittawer,

Edward Browne,

Willm Bellgrave, shoomaker,

John Pepper, Smyth,

Willm Brucklesbye, glover,

John Wood, butcher, a disorderlie fellowe, him
have I bound with twoe ſufficient ſuerties to appeyre
before the Judge att the next assice

Such as were furnyſhed wth Shott, vicz

John Crosse, Whelewright,

John Camden, Whelewright,

Thomas Brucklesbye,

Valentyne Brocks,

Thomas Pawliners,

Rychard Basforde,

Samuell Yates, junior,

The Names of them that have beene Punyſhed, vicz

The ſaide John Crosse and Willm Belgrave,

Thomas Davye, baker,

Thomas Seywell, paynter,
Raphe Aston, laborer,
Roger More, late soldyar

George Langley, Payneter, sayth he paynted the
Maye Pole neire to the Talbot and was paide by one
William Johnson 8vant to M^r Hugh Hunter, 1^s

Allso he saith he paynted the Maye Pole in the
Humberstone Gate, and was paide for the same by one
Willm Salesburye 8vant to Willm Hunt, Chambllyn
of Leicester, j^d [Hall Book]

Burgus Leic^d The Examynacōn of Symon Ynge of
Leyc Yeoman, taken the xvijth daye of
Maye Anno Primo Reg^e Jacobi &c before
James Ellys, Mayor of the Burgh of
Leyc & Rob^t Gyllott, Justices of the
Peace of oure Soaigne Lorde the King
wthin the Burgh of Leyc &c

The said Examynate beinge demaunded what
speaches was betwixt him & W^m Saunderson vpon
Saturdaye night the last of Aprill last past, sayth that
he, this Exā, syttinge then at his owne dore, the said
W^m Saunderson cam to him & said he cold not see the
Maye Pole at his owne dore for the elme tree standinge
at Pollards dore, & wthall the said Saunderson asked
this Exā what harme the pole dyd, to the w^{ch} he, this
Exā saythe he answered not any thinge at all concern-
inge the s^d Maye Pole, & then the sayd Saunderson
said that Maye Poles were sett vppe in all places as
the King cam, & that the Kinge allowed them in his
Book Wherupon this Exā saythe he wished the s^d
Saunderson to be contented & lett vs be ruled by M^r
Mayor & the Justices And the said Exā said he dyd
thinke the King, as yet, had made no newe lawes, but

those that were in the Queenes Ma^{ts} tyme. Then the s^d Saunderson replied & said, hathe not the King made certen Knights by lawe & also hathe allowed ij Scottish pieces of coyne, the one of gold, the other of sylver, to be current in England by lawe, to the w^{ch} this Exā saythe he answered not anythinge & further speeches (to his remembraunce) he saythe there was not betwixt them [Hall Book]

Common Hall the xvij of May, 1603

M^d in regard whereof, as also of the manifold inconveniences and disorders w^{ch} wee have seene by experiance vsually to accompany the settinge vp of Maye poles in o^r towne, by reason of the multitude of rude & disorderly psons therein, & for the w^{ch} they have been heretofore for many yeares forbidden & restrained amongst vs [Hall Book]

19 die Maij 1603 Coram Jacobi Ellice, Maior.

Willm Leppington of Leic the yonger, slater, sayth that vpon Mondaye night, the 16th of Maye last past, Anthonye ffletcher said unto M^r Gillott (after the Maye Pole was taken downe in Belgrave Gate), whoe shall paye Willm Leppington for the takinge downe of the Maye Pole, whereunto M^r Gillott answered and willed the said ffletcher to forbeare his speeches and goe to bedd Wherevpon the said ffletcher answered, well, I will coule you both (meaninge M^r Gillott and the said Leppington) for this

Allso he sayth, that the same Mondaye night, Agnes Watkin, the wyfe of John Watkin of Leic shomaker, sayd vnto this Examⁿ, *Thou art like unto like, as the devill sayd to the Collyar* [Hall Book]

Thomas Tyers beinge in the Hall the xxijth of May, at night, should say, in the hearinge of John Russill, John Pepper, John Spencer, and others there beinge, that he would see M^r Maiore hanged as heighe as the topp of the hall before he would be at his comaund, either for the cuttinge doun of May Poles or any thinge els [Hall Book]

Sayturdaie the xxijth of Maie 1603, att night John Woodd, of Leicester, Butcher, delyvered theise speeches to M^r Maior, vii^cz that he hard one saye vnto hym, that Thom^m Pestell shoulde reporte to one settinge vppon a bulke in Lei^c, that talked of M^r Sacheverill, that the said M^r Sach^vell was above M^r Maior And further, the said John Wood said that M^r Maior did enoughe to make the wholl towne to ryse against him

And also said that M^r Maior and others had done him wronge but he would be righted, or ells hee wode spend Twentie Pounds [Hall Book]

xvj^o die Maij Anno Primo Reg^a Jacobi, etc

Rec^d of Henrie ffreeman, one of his Ma^s Messengers, iij^o p^clamac^{ons} by wrytt vnder his Highnes seale, dated at Westmⁱ ix^o die Maij A^o sup^d etc p^hibitinge all man^f of charter or graunte of any kind of Monopolies & other things and p^hibytinge all Beare baytinge, Bulbaytinge, Enterludes, Co^mon Playes, or other like disordred or vnlawfull Exercises or pastimes, to be kept or vsed vpon any Sabbathe daye

Geven the Messenger in Reward iij^s iij^d
[Hall Book]

The ffirſt of May
Bing the Saboth day,
In Quene Maris time

It was a silver mine;
 And in Quene Elizabethes tyme
 A golden mine
 And now it is colde
 A ledene mine
 Worser than copper
 A drossie mine
 God save Kyng James the fferst
 and of Scotland the vj
 (Thursdaye the 19th of Maye 1603)

[*Hall Book*]

19^o die Maij, 1603, Coram James Ellice Maior et
 Rob^t Heyrick

Christopher Walton, genl Servant to the Kings Ma^{re},
 saith this present moringe, being the xix of Mai 1603, he hard M^r Hunter report that John Knight of
 Leicester, tanner, shoulde saye that he hard M^r Sampson, in his saymon, saye that gold is turned to silver,
 silver to brasse, and brasse to drosse

M^r Sampson¹ is charged wth these speeches, and vt-
 terlye denyeth the same

Rychard Tydesdale, of Leicester, Comer of Jersey,
 saythe that vpon May daye, in the afternoon, att the
 Sarmoun in St Martyns church in Leicester, he hard M^r
 Nathaniell Sampson, in his saymon, delyver these
 speeches, viȝz that we hawe had a golden world these

¹ Nathaniel Sampson, Master of Wigston's Hospital, was one of the two sons of Thomas Sampson, Dean of Chichester, a celebrated Puritan divine, who went abroad in Queen Mary's reign, and in 1556 joined the church at Geneva, of which John Knox was one of the pastors. He married a niece of Latimer. See a notice of him in Burn's "History of Parish Registers," 2nd ed., 1862, p. 277

44 yeeres, and from golde to silver, and from silver to
brasse, and from brasse to Iron, and from Iron to Cley
[*Hall Book*]

1604

Itm given to the Kings Ma ^{ts} Trumpitters ¹	xx ^s
Itm geven to the Lorde Straffords Pleyars	x ^s
Itm the xxiiij th of October given to the Lorde Shandoes Players, whoe did not play	x ^s
Itm given then to the said Players in Wyne & Suger	xix ^a
Itm the xviii th of Novemb ^r to a Beare- warde	vij ^s viij ^d
Itm the xxij th of Decemb ^r given to the Lorde Dudley his Playars, who did not play	x ^s

1605

Itm the xix th of Januarie given to the Earle of Huntingdon his playars	x ^s
Itm given to a Beareward at M ^r Mayors feaste	x ^s
Itm given to the Earle of Huntingdon his Playors	xvj ^s
Itm given to the Queenes Ma ^{ts} Playars ²	xl ^s

¹ On occasion of the Progress of the Duke of York, afterwards Charles I, to Leicester, on his way to the Court from Scotland, on the 15th of August He remained until the 17th

² This was the company formerly acting as the servants of the Earl of Worcester —COLLIER, vol 1, p 350

Itm p^d to Thomas Heyrick¹ for lathes
& for neyles spent at the Hawle at
such tyme as the Queenes Playors
were there

ix^d

Itm p^d for mendinge the cheyre in the
plor at the Hall, more then was re-
ceyved of Raphe Edgerton, wth was
broken by the Playars

xj^d

Itm p^d to Rychard Ynge, glasyar, for
lxx quarrells of glasse

ij^svj^d

Itm p^d to hym more for sawderinge of
other panes of glasse in the Hall

vj^d

Itm p^d to M^r Bonnett the xijth of No-
vember for fyve yards ij quarters of
brode Tawney Clothe for the Wayts
Cotes at xij^s the yarde

ij^l ix^s

1606

Itm given to the Earle of Harford his
playars

x^s

Itm the xxviii of August given to an
other Companye of Playors

x^s

Itm given to the Lorde Dudley his Players

xx^s

Itm in August given to the Kings Ma^{ts}
Payars que^r

xl^s

Itm given to the Lady Elizabeths grace,²
her Trumpittōs

v^s

¹ One of the Aldermen of the Borough, brother to Sir William Herrick of Beaumanor, of whom the present possessor of the estate, William Perry Herrick, Esq., is the worthy descendant

² The Princess Elizabeth, afterwards Queen of Bohemia
She was at Leicester on several occasions

Itm given to the Duke of Lynox Trum-			
piters . . .	ij ^s	iiij ^d	
Itm given to the M ^r of the Babons, ¹			
Lycensed to travell by the Kings			
Warrant	ij ^s	vj ^d	
Itm the last of October given to certen			
playars	xx ^s		

1607.

Itm given to the Queenes Maies^{ts} Players xxx^s

Burgus } Ad Coēm Aulam tent ibm die veneris
 Leicestř } scl^o xxx^o die Januarij Anñ R. Jacobi nūc
 Angle &c Quarti et Scotie Quadragesimo (1606) Coram
 þfat Lebeo Chamberlyn, Maiore Burgi Leic pred et al
 Burgeūs^s Burgi pred vicz xxiiij^{or} et xlviij^o, And agreed
 vpon as followeth, vicz —

Playes It is agreed that non of either of the Twoe
 Companies shalbee compelled att anie tyme hereafter to
 paye towards anie playes, but such of them as shalbee
 then present at the said playes the Kings Ma^{ts} playors,
 the Queenes Ma^{ts} playors, and the young Prince his
 playors excepted, and alsoe all such playors as doe
 belonuge to anie of the Lords of his Ma^{ts} most honorable
 Privie Counsell alsoe excepted, to theise they are to
 paye accordinge to the Auncyent custome, havinge
 Warnyng by the Mace bearer to bee att euyne such
 play [Hall Book, iii, p 313]

1608

Itm the xxvth daye of Marche, given to
 the Lorde Dudley his Playars, whoe

¹ Probably the celebrated Edward Alleyne

weare not sufferd to play at the Town Hall for theire Rewaide	x ^s
Itm the xij th day of August, given to the Kings Ma ^{ts} Trumppitters	xx ^s
Itm given to the Lorde Admyrall his Trumppiters, beinge five of them	ij ^s
Itm the vj th of Aprill given to the Earle of Penbrooks Trumppiters	ij ^s
Itm the xiii th of Aprill given to the yonge Lorde Hastings Muzicōns	ij ^s
Itm p ^d for wyne and suger given to the Lorde Spencers men	xiii ^d
Itm the vj th of June given to the Queenes Players	xl ^s
Itm given to the Princes Players of the White Chapple, London	xx ^s
Itm the xxij th of Augустe given to the Children of the Revells	xx ^s
Itm the xxvij th of September given to one other Companye of y ^e Queenes playōs	xx ^s
Itm p ^d for mendinge the glasse Wyn- dowes att the towne hall more then was given by the playors whoe broake the same	ij ^s
Itm p ^d for mendinge the Latice Win- dowes att the towne hall	xiii ^d
Itm p ^d for mendinge of the Shutt Wyn- dowes in the towne Hall	iii ^d
Itm recē of the Constables in Leicester for Mulburye Trees	xviii ^s xj ^d
Itm p ^d for Mulburye trees, ¹ Coīaunded to bee brought and sett and plant in	

¹ See Appendix

dyvers Countieſ of thiſ Realme, by Liſes from the Lordſ of His Maieſt ^s moſt Honorable Privye Counſell	xxx ^s vi ^d
Itm the firſt daye of Octobre given to the Princeſ Playors	1 ^s
Itm giuen to the right honorable the Lorde Albuſye hiſ Playors	xl ^s

1610¹

Itm the xx th daie of februarie giuen to the Earle of Arrendell hiſ playors that played not	x ^s
Itm the firſte daie of Julie giuen once more to the Lorde Albuſye hiſ Playors	xx ^s
Itm the laſt of December giuen to the Queeneſ Playors	xl ^s
Itm paide to M ^r John Bonnett for ſeaven yards of Orenge Tawnye Clothe for the Wayteſ Cotes	iiij ^{l¹} ij ^s ij ^d

1612

Itm recē of the Companies of the xxiiij th and xlviij th att twoe ſeſtall tymeſ, beinge taxed for ij ſeuerall Playes this yeere .	xxiiij ^s vii ^d
Dekeyſ Itm the yeerlie rent of the peece of ground called the Bare gardin	xx ^d

¹ The Plague broke out in the town in the ſummer of 1610, and prevailed, with increased virulence, during 1611, when no viſits of playors are recorded, and the judges, refuſing to come to the town, the aſſizes were held at Hinckley. See a letter on thiſ ſubject from *Thomas Šakespeare* and others, of Lutterworth, in the Appendix.

Itm the xiiiij th daie of June Giuen to the Queenes Playors	xl ^s
Itm the xxx th of Julye Giuen to the Lady Elizabeth her playors	xl ^s
Itm given to his Maiest ^s Trumpiters for therre fees ¹	xl ^s
Itm given to the Kings Muzicons for therre fees ¹	vij ^s viij ^d
Itm paide for all the Wayts Cotes or Lyveries for this yeere	1 ^s
Itm rece of Edmunde Pollarde, Muzicon the seconde son of Thomas Pollarde, husbandman for his fredom	v ^s
Itm rece of the Companyes of the xxiiij th and xlviij th for a playe, and for de- faults att a Comon Hall, as appeyres by the bills	xiiiij ^s x ^d
Itm the xxvij th daie of October giuen to the Queenes Playors	xl ^s

1613

Itm paide for a Gallon of Sacke and a Gallon of Clarett wyne and one pounde of Suger giuen to the Knights and Gentlemen att the Horsse runyng for the Golden Snaffle	vij ^s iiiij ^d
Itm the xvij th daye of Marche giuen to the Queenes Players	xx ^s

¹ These are two out of numerous entries of customary fees paid to the Kings Officers, during the visit of James I and Prince Henry to the town, on August the 18th, and for which great preparations were made by the Corporation. The royal guests remained here two or three days

Itm̄ recē of the Companyes of the 24 th and the 48 th towards a Play	xij ^s viij ^d
Itm̄ the xij th daye of October, Given to y ^e Ladie Elizabeth her Players by the appoymt ^m of M ^r Maior and his Bretherne	xl ^s
Itm̄ the xxij th of December given to the Queenes Playors	xl ^s

1614

Itm̄ the xx th of Januarie given to the Lord Awbenyes ¹ Playors	xij ^s iiij ^d
Itm̄ the xxvij th daye of Aprill paide for Twoe Gallons of Sacke given to the Gentlemen at the Hoſe ruſyng for the golden Cupp	viiij ^s
Itm̄ given to the Trumpiters ffor there ffees ²	xl ^s
Itm̄ given to the Siant Trumpiter for his ffee ²	x ^s
Itm̄ paid to Barnabas Turvile for mend- inge the Muzicons silver Collars and Scutchens that wanted certen peeces of Silver .	v ^s
Itm̄ recē of the Companyes of the xxvij th and xlviij th for a Playe	ix ^s x ^d
Itm̄ the tenth of November given to the Princes Playors	xl ^s
Itm̄ the sixteenth of December given to the Lorde Dudlies Playors	x ^s

¹ Albany's² Paid during another royal progress James was here on
the same day as in 1612,—the 18th of August No musicians
are mentioned in the list of officers on this occasion

1615

Itm given to the Queenes Maiesties Highnes Playors ¹	xl ^s
Itm given to the Earle of Sussex Playors the last of August	xxx ^s
Itm p ^d for a Gallon of Sacke and a Gal- lon of Clarett wyne given to the Jus- tices and Gentlemen att the Horsse runyng in Easter weeke	vj ^s viij ^d
Itm the xvij th daye of October Given to the Queenes Playors	xl ^s
Itm given to one other Companye of the Queenes Playors	xxx ^s

1616

Itm given to a Companye of Playors called the Children of the Revells, ² which had Warrant vnder the Kings hand and the privye signett	xxx ^s
Itm the xxij th of februarie given to one other Companye of the Queenes Play- ors for a small gratuytie	xxij ^s
Itm the xxij th daye of June given to one other Companye of Playors called the Children of the Revells, ² havinge the Kings Warrant	xx ^s
Itm the first of Julye given to the Lady Elizabeth hir Playois	xx ^s
Itm paid for wyne and Suger given to a Companye of the Kings Trumpiters att his Highnes beinge at Leicester ³	ij ^s iiij ^d

¹ This visit was either in April or May² See Appendix³ In the month of August, on which occasion he personally

Itm given to the Trumpiters for there
ffees

x1^s

1617

Itm the sixt of februarye given to the
Queenes Playors

xx^s

Itm given to one other Companye of the
Queenes Playors

xx^s

Itm given to one other Companye of
Playors called the Chyldren of the Re-
vells, w^{ch} had Warrant vnder the Kings
hand & p signett

xxij^s

Itm paid for Seaven yards and a halfe of
Tawnye Clothe for the Wayts Cots
now of them selves putt into Cloaks ij^l xvij^s

Itm allowed vnto the late Chamberlins
for there neclgence in not settinge
downe paid to a Companye of Playors,
which had the Townes rewarde
of xx^s, as they verylie thincke

viij^s ob q3

Itm the xvijth daye of December given
to the Queenes Playors

xxij^s

1618

Itm the xxijth of februarie, given to the
Ladye Elizabeth her Playors

xxij^s

Itm given to a Companye of Playors
called the Children of the Revells,
whoe weare not suffered to playe

x^s

examined a boy (nephew of the celebrated preacher, "Silver-tongued Smith"), who had counterfeited to be bewitched, and had thus caused the execution of nine unhappy old women as witches, in this town, on the preceding 18th of July. The King detected the deception, and ordered the release of five other so-called witches, then lying in gaol

Itm given to one other Companye of
Playors called the Children of the
Revells whoe were also not sufferd
to playe

x^s

Itm given to a Companye of Playors
that cam wth a Comission *under the G
seale of England*¹

ij^s

Itm given to one other Companye of
Playors called the Children of the Re-
vells whoe had speciall lycense to playe

J^l

Itm paid for sixe yards and three quarters
of Lyverie Tawney Clothe for the
Wayts Cotes, nowe made into Cloaks

ij^l xv^s

Itm paide for ij yards of Ribbin for one
of the Wayts to hinge Scutchin
in att the Maiors feast

1619

Guifts to the Playors

Imprimis, given to the Princes Playors

J^l xiij^s

Item, given to the Playors that shewed
Etalion Motion²

x^s

Item, given to the Lorde Marques his
Playors

J^l

Item, given to the Kings Ma^{ties} Playors²

J^l

Item, given to the Princes Playors

J^l x^s

Item, given to Swynnerton² and his
Companye of Playōs

J^l

Item, given to Terry² and his Companye
of Playors, havinge Large Auctoritie

J^l xj^t

¹ The words printed in *Italics* have a line drawn through
them, probably not as an erasure (as would be the case in the
present day), but as a mark of emphasis, frequently in use at
that period

² See Appendix.

1620

Proclamacons and Players

Itm̄ geven to the Prince his players, who played not	xx ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Lord Dudleyes Players	x ^s
Itm̄ geven to an other Companie of Players, beinge the Earle of Wor- esters	x ^s
Itm̄ geven to a Companye of Players, called the Children of the Revels	x ^s

1621

Proclamacons and Players

Itm̄ paide for three Proclamacōns, one concerninge gould thred, one other con- cerning Ale houses, & the third con- cerninge S ^r Giles Monpsson ¹	vij ^s vj ^d
Itm̄ geven to the Kings Players who played not in the Towne	xx ^s
Itm̄ geven to the Ladie Elizabeth her players the Twentith of february	xiiij ^s iiiij ^d
Itm̄ geven to the Ladie Elizabeth hir playres, who played not, the eight of April	xiiij ^s iiiij ^d
Itm̄ geven to the Queenes players who played not	xx ^s
Item payd for vij yards of Livery Taw- ney broad cloth, for the Waits Liues at xj ^s the yarde	vij ^{li} xix ^s x ^d

¹ See "Rushworth," vol 1, pp 24, 26, 27, &c Sir Giles Mompesson, the noted monopolist, was the original from whom Massinger drew the character of "Sir Giles Overreach," in his Comedy, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts"

Item for ij yards of ribon for the Waits boyes to hange their Schuchions in	xiiij ^d
Item given the Princes Players, who played not, the ix th of Novemb̄ 1621	xxx ^s
Item given to the late Queene Anne her Servaunts, not playing, for a gratuitye, the xxij th of December 1621	xxij ^s

1622

Guifts to Players and to Messengers for Proclamacōns

Item to the Children of the Revells, the x th of January, for a gratuitye ¹	xx ^s
Item, the xiiij th of January, to the ffortune Players having the Kings Broad seale to their Warrant, ² as a Gratuitye, not playing .	xxx ^s
Item given the ij ^d of March, ² to a Com- pany of Players, beinge the Lord Dudleys servants, not playing .	v ^s
Item given to a Company of Players, being the Lady Elizabeth her Servaunts, the xv th of March, [who] playd not	xv ^s
Item to a Company of Players, being the Queenes Servants, and Children of the Revells, the xij th of Aprill, playd not	xxij ^s
Item given to another Company of Players, the xvij th of Aprill, vnder the Lorde Chamblins auctoritye	x ^s
Item payd a Company of Players, being the Kings Servants, the viij th of June	x ^s

¹ It will be seen that in this and the following year nearly all the payments were "gratuities," the Companies not being allowed to play in the town

² See Appendix

Item given to Vincent and his Company, by M ^r Maiors appointm ^t , having authoritye from the King to shew feats of Activitye	x ^s
Item given a Company of Players, the xxvj th of August, being the Kings servants, for a gratuitye	xx ^s
Item payd for Ribbyn for the Waytes	i ^j ^s
Item for a pottle of burned Sacke ¹ to the Hall	i ^j ^s viij ^d
Item giuen to the Princes Players that played not, for a gratuitye from the Towne	xxij ^s
Item giuen to the Lord Dudleyes players, for the like	x ^s
Item giuen to a Company of Players w ^{ch} were late Seruants to Queene Anne for a gratuitye not playeinge	xx ^s
Item giuen the same daye to a Companye of Players, called the Children of the Revells	vij ^s viij ^d

1623

Guifts to Messengers for Proclamacōns & to Players	
Item giuen to the Ladie Elizabeths players, that played not, the xxv th day of Januarie	xx ^s
Item giuen to a Company of Players that did belong to the M ^r of the Re- vells, w ^{ch} played not	iij ^s iiiij ^d

Item geven to a Company of Players w ^{ch} were the Kings Servants, the xxij th of September, who playde not	xxij ^s
Item paid for seauen yards of Oringe Colour Broade Cloth for the Waites at x ^s vj ^d the yard	ij ^h xvj ^s
Item paid for Ribbins for the Waites	xv ^d
Item paide for watchinge accordinge to the Counsells Letters ¹ for the stayninge and examininge of suspected persons at the Northe Gate iij ^s vj ^d at the Weste Gates v ^s at the South Gate vj ^s viij ^d at the East Gate v ^s in the whole	xxj ^s ij ^d
Item paid to Watchmen that laie in Wait to apprehend Elias Chapman vpon suspicōn of a Robberie	ij ^s
Ifem paide to M ^r Ives for wine that was giuen to M ^r Awditor ffanshawe, when he was at M ^r Ives his house, & that was giuen to the Kings trumpeters when his Mat ^e was in the Countrey	v ^s viij ^d
Item paid to a Companie of Players, the Ladie Elizabeth servants, on the xij th daie of October, 1623	x ^s
Item paid the xxvij th daie of October that was giuen to the Princes Players j ^h ij ^s iij ^d	

1624

Guifts to Messengers for Proclamacōns and to Players
Item giuen to a Companie of Players that were the Queenes Seruants, the Seauen and Twentith daie of Jaruarie

xl^s

¹ See Appendix

Item giuen to the Lord B the x th daie of februarie	players	x ^s
Item giuen the xvij th daie of March to a Companie of Players, called the Chil- dren of the Revells		x ^s
Item Geuen to John Daniell who had a Pattent for the Children of Bristoll ¹	v ^s viij ^d	
Item Giuen to M ^r Townesend and his fellowes, being the Ladie Elizabeth her players, ¹ on the ix th daie of Julie	xx ^s	
Item paid for Ribbinng for the Waites Skutchions	xvij ^s	
Item giuen to Samuell Yates and John Coop for sounding their Trumpetts when the King was proclaimed	viij ^s	
Item giuen to two Trumpetōs when he was pclaimed the second time	ij ^s	
Item paid to Anthonie Coop for Rib- bining w ^{ch} was giuen to Noane the Drummer	xij ^d	
Item paid for the Bearward to M ^r New- combe for his charges in the Gaole, beinge prest for a souldier	ij ^s viij ^d	
Item giuen to the Kings Playors, called the Children of the Revells	j ^l viij ^s viij ^d	
Item paid the xxij th of October to Playors being the Princes servants, goeing by the name of the Youths of Bristowe ¹	j ^l v ^s	
Item paid to a Company of Playors, late Queene Anne her seruants, the xxvij th daie of December	j ^l	

¹ See Appendix

1625

Gifts to Messengers for Proclaymacōns and to Playors Imprimis, paid to Players being the Princes seruants	J ^h
Item paid to a Company of Playors, beinge late the Lorde Beaumonts seruants	v ^s
Item paid to twelve men for carrying halbeards on May day	vj ^s
Item payed for two elnes of eightpennie broade ribin, to hange the Waistes Collers in	J ^s iiij ^d
Item geuen to one Slator ¹ and his Com- panie beinge the Kings Playors, the xv th of October	J ^h
Item geuen to a Companie of Playors the xvij th of 9ber, being the Earle of Pembrooks seruants	xv ^s

1626

Item geuen to Ellis Geste, Thomas Swinerton, Arthuret Grimes, ¹ and others, going about with a Pattent from the M ^r of the Reuells the sixth of March	J ^h
Item payed Pollard and his Companie ² on S ^t Mathews Daye	vj ^s viij ^d
Item payed for Two elnes of greene Riben, for the Wayts Scutchions	J ^s viij ^d
Item geuen to a Companie of Players	x ^s
Item geuen to a man and a woeman that were at Couldwells playinge w th Puppets	iiijs

¹ See Appendix² The Town Waits

Item geuen to a Companie of Players
the xxjth of Nouember, who lay at
M^r Goodfellowes vj^s viij^d

1627

Item payed to a Companye of Players,
being the Kings Players J^h

Item payed to Pollard and his Companie¹
for playinge before M^r Maior, on May
Day

Item geuen to a Companie of Players,
called the Children of the Reuells,
July viijth

Item geuen to a Companie of Players,
 beinge the Earle of Pembrooks Ser-
 uants

Item geuen to the Lord Dudley his
Players

Item geuen to a Companie of Players,
called the Children of the Reuells x⁵

1628

Item geuen to a Companie of Players x^s

Item geuen to a greate Companie of
Players called the Cheefe Reuells, by
M^r Maior, M^r Gilliott, & M^r Ellis,
therre appoyntment

Item geuen to a Companie of Players,
 beinge Swinnerton² and his Companie ¹¹

¹ The Town Waits

² See note in Appendix under the year 1619.

Item geuen to Knight ¹ and his Companie, beinge Players	x ^s
Item payed for two elnes of eight penie Ribon, to hange the Waits scuchions in	j ^s ij ^d
Item geven to M ^r Kite, ¹ a playē & his Companie	x ^s

1629

Item geven to M ^r Moore ¹ & his Com- panie, beinge the Ladie Elizabeth her Players	j ^l
Item geven to M ^r Guest, a player, & his Companie	j ^l
Item geven to Dishley ¹ and his fellowes	v ^s
Item geven to M ^r ffenner, ¹ the Kings Poet, to passe the Towne w th out playinge	iiij ^s iiiij ^d

1630

Item geven to a Companie of Players, called the Revells	j ^l
Item geven to an other Companie of Players w th a Coṁission from the Master of the [Revells]	. vj ^s viij ^d
Item geven to an other Com[pany of Players] with Coṁission from the M ^r of [his Ma ^{ts} Rev]ells	j ^l
Item geven to another Companie of Players w th Comission from the Mas- ter of his Ma ^{ts} Revells .	j ^l

¹ See Appendix

Item geuen to an other Companie of
Players, beinge the Ladye Elizabeth
her Servants J^h

1632

Imprimis geuen to a Companie of Players xij^s $iiij^d$
Item payed to a Companie of Players J^h x^s
Item geuen to a Companie of Players
the xxvth of December, 1632 J^h

1633

Item payed to Twelve Trayned Soul-
diers, for walkinge the ffaior on May
day before M^r Maior xij^s
Item payed to foure Trumpeters and a
Boy, for soundinge before the Com-
panies the same day vij^s ij^d
Item then payd to Yates his wyfe for
arminge the men J^s
Item geuen to a Company of Players by
Mastē Maior his appoynment x^s
Item payed to a Companie of Players
the Nineteenth day of ffebruarie J^h
Item geuen to M^r Perry,¹ a Player, and
his Companie J^h

1634

Item geuen to a Companie of Players . xij^s
Item geuen to a Companie of Players J^h ij^s
Item geuen to the Princes Players the
 x^th of August ij^h

¹ See Appendix

1635

Item geven to M ^r Perrie, ¹ a Player, and his Companie to passe by the Towne and not play	J ^h
Itm ^m p ^d for Nyne yardes of Gingerlyne broadcloath for the Waights cloakes at 11 ^s the yard	111 ^h xix ^s
Itm ^m for 111 ^s yardes of Ribbin for the charter & for the Waits	ij ^s vj ^a
Itm ^m given the 22 th of November to a Companye of Players	j ^{l1} xiiij ^s mjj ^d

1636

Itm ^m given the 22 th of Aprill to a Com- panye of Players, called the Kings Revells	J ^h
Itm ^m given the 12 th Julye to a Companye of Players	j ^{l1}
Itm ^m given to the Kings trumpetts ²	j ^{l1} x ^s
Itm ^m given to the Palsgraves groome ²	x ^s
Itm ^m given the 8 th of November to a Companye of Players	x ^s

1637

Itm ^m given to a Companye of Players, being the Kings Revills	J ^h
Itm ^m giuen to the Lord Gorin & the Lord of Leicesters players by M ^r Maiors appointment	j ^h 111 ^d

¹ See Appendix, 1633

² On the 12th of August, when in attendance on "Ludovicus, Prince Palsgrave of the Rhine, (who) did dyne at the Angell in Leicester comeing from our royal King Charles (who was then at Tutburye), to go to Honeby [Holmby], where the Queene then laye at," &c [Hall Book]

Itm giuen to the Children of the Revells
by M^r Maiors appointment vjs
Itm giuen to a Company of Players at
M^r Goodfellows by M^r Maiors ap-
pointment vs

1638

Trumpeters

Itm giuen to the Kinges Trumpeters &
ffootmen by M^r Maiors appointm^t¹ J^l vs
Itm giuen to the Princes Trumpeters by
M^r Maiors appointment x^s
Itm giuen to S^r John Sucklings Trum-
peters by M^r Maiors appointment vs
Itm giuen to a Company of Trumpeters
by the appointm^t of M^r Maior, M^r
Ive & M^r Inge vs

1639

Item given the Earle of Arundell at his
being in the Angell 4 gall of wyne
and 4^l & dj of Sugar J^l ij^s iiiij^d
Item guen the same tyme 9 of his Ma^{ts}
Trumpiters that waited vpon the said
Earle ij^l
Item guuen to the Princes Trumpeters,
the Earle of Essex, and the Earle of
Newcastles trumpeters, by M^r Maiors
appoynment J^l

Players

Inprimis, giuen to the Children of the
Revells iiiij^s

¹ On one of the King's visits to Leicester, during his progress
The "Gests" of this, as of many royal progresses, is to be
found among the Borough MSS The King was at Leicester
on Saturday, the 11th of August, on his way to Tutbury

Item geven to the servants of the Masters of the Reuell

ij^s1640¹

Players

Itm giuen to a Company of Players by
M^r Maiors appointment vpon the 10th
of October 1640

v^s

Trumpeters

Itm giuen to his Ma^{ties} Trumpeters by
M^r Maiors appointm^t

x^s

Itm giuen to the Princes Trumpeters by
M^r Maiors appointm^t

x^s

1642

Itm p^d for 13 yards of bastard scarlett
for the Waites Clokes, Hartshorne
& Burkes Coates at 11^s the yarde

vij^l iiij^s

Players

Itm given to a Companie of Plaiers by
M^r Maiors appointment

x^s

Trumpeters

Itm giuen to tenn of his Ma^{ts} Trumpeters
in their passage to Yorke² to his
Ma^{te} by M^r Maiors appointment

Itm giuen to the Princes Trumpeters,
in their passage to York to his Ma^{te}
by M^r Maiors appointment

j^l

¹ "Coming events cast their shadows before" We are now at the outbreak of the Great Civil War Payments to players almost disappear, and are replaced by many payments to soldiers Numerous gifts of wine to puritan preachers are also of constant recurrence

² The King returned from Leicester to Yorkshire on the 25th of July

1643

Itm p^d for thirteeen yards of redd cloth
for the Waits Clokes & for Harts-
horns & Burkes their Coats vj^l xvjs

1645

Trumpeters

Itm paied to the Kings Trumpeters and
other when the Towne was
taken, by Warrant from M^r Comp-
troller & by M^r Maiors appointment¹ x^l x^s

1660²

Itm p^d to M^r Henshaw, M^r Callis and
Richard Coleman for a Banquett when
the Maior and Aldermen went to
visitt Generall Monck as appeares by
their Bills v^l xvjs ij^d

It p^d to Generall Moncks Trumpetters
att the same time by the Maior and
Aldermens order J^l

It p^d to Generall Moncks Drummers att
the same time xjs xj^d

It p^d to ffoure Trumpetters upon the day
of Thanksgiving for the restoring of
his Ma^{te} to his Crowne v^s

It p^d to eight Drummers att the same
time vijs

¹ The town was assaulted by the royal forces, and, after a gallant defence, captured on the 31st of May

² In this and the following years no liveries were provided for the Town Waits, nor until after the Restoration

1661

Itm p^d which was given to nyne Drumes
& three Trumpetts the 23rd of Aprill
1661, being the day of his Ma^{ties} royall
Coronation xij^s

1663

Itm p^d to the Waites for three quarters
Wages iiij^{l*l*}

1665

Itm p^d to the Duke of Yorkes Trum-
peters, his pages, Coachmen & the
Duches pages¹ iiiij^{l*l*} xv^s

Itm to M^r Maior for a banquet p^sented
to Capt Bassett, Comander of his
Ma^{ties} owne troope, by the Maior and
severall Aldermen at the White Lyon ij^{l*l*} xv^s

Itm p^d to the said Captaines Trumpeters
& Kettle Drumes at the same time,
by order vij^s vj^d

1666

Itm p^d to the Waights & Drumers the
29th day of May last past being his
Ma^{ties} birthday & happy returne to
this Kingdome xij^s

1668

Itm paid to the 5 Waytes for two quar-
ters Wages at a noble a qrter a peece iiij^{l*l*} vj^s viij^d

¹ The Duke of York (afterwards James II) with his
Duchess came to Leicester on the 31st of July, on their way
to York, and were entertained by the Corporation

Itm paid to M^r ffawnt and S^r John
Bales Huntsmen upon Easter Mun-
day

x^s

1670

Itm paid to M^r Maior for silver lace for
y^e Waites Cloakes & other things for
tryming of the said Cloakes

j^l xi^s ii^d

Itm paid to the Waites for playeinge on
Easter Munday

xv^s

Itm paid to the Huntsman upon Easter
Munday

xv^s

Itm paid to y^e Cryer & Beadle for looke-
ing to y^e Conduit when y^e Mounty-
bancks were in Towne

ij^s

Itm p^d to Robert Rowe, Musician, and
his Company for playing at Mich^s
faire last by M^r Maiors order

01 10 00

Itm paid to M^r Rowe, Musitian, and
his Company for playeing on the feast
day, by M^r Maiors order

02 10 00

1671

At a Common Hall held on the 5th September, 1671
It is agreed & ordered at this meeeting that Thomas
Bonner & y^e other of his company whoe have requested
to be Waits to the Corporacōn shalbee sent for, and
the termes to be agreed vpon between the Corporacōn
& them to be left to M^r Maior & some of his auncient-
est brethren as hee shall call to his assistance for that
purpose [Hall Papers]

Itm paid Northampton Waites for
playeing on Easter Munday & at
Maday faire before the Companies

04 00 00

Itm̄ paid to foure huntsmen upon Easter		
Munday	.	00 16 00
Itm̄ p ^d to two and twenty men that brought and carried hares before M ^r Maior & the Aldm ^r by M ^r Mayors order		Not allowed
Itm̄ paid for a horse hire for the Mace bearer, when he went to invite y ^e Earle of Stanfورد to breakefast on Easter		
Munday	00 01 00	
Itm̄ paid for sending for Thomas Bonney & his men & for playing before the Companies on Michaellmas faire last	01 05 00	

1673

Itm̄ paid to Widow Rivett for ale fetcht to the Gaynesborow, when the Moun- tebank Doctor was there, by M ^r Maiors order	00 02 06
--	----------

1674

Itm̄ paid to Geo Broome for hunting on Easter Monday	00 10 00
P ^d M ^r Bradley towards the Plates to be runn for	04 00 00

1677

Itm̄ paid to M ^r Martin for cloth for the Waits Cloaks, and M ^r Waightman for lace and triming for the same, and for makeing them, and other things, app ^s by Bill	10 17 08
---	----------

1678.

Itm paid to the Waites for their yearly Sallery	05 00 00
Itm paid to the Waites for playing on Easter Munday	00 10 00
Itm paid to the Huntsmen on Easter Munday	00 11 00

1680

Itm paid to S ^r Henry Beaumonts Hunts- men on Easter Munday by M ^r Maiors order	00 10 00
---	----------

1682

Itm paid to S ^r Henry Beaumonts Hunts- man on Easter Munday 5 ^s and to M ^r Meades his Huntsman, for bringing their hounds that day 2 ^s 6 ^d in toto	00 07 06
--	----------

1690

Itm paid to Collonell Listers man, when he brought the Earl of Rutlands Plate to M ^r Mayor the 30 th day of Septem- ber, which was to be run for in the Abbey meadow 5 ^s , and for two yards & a halfe of ribbin, to tye on the cover, 1 ^s 3 ^d , by M ^r Maiors order	00 06 03
--	----------

Itm paid to M ^r John Pare, for wyne & Ale upon the same occasion to treate Collonell Lister & sevall other Gents as appeares by Bill	01 14 00
--	----------

1691

Itm paid to M ^r Bowler towards buying the Towne Plate, that was run for in	
--	--

September 1691, by order of a Common
Hall

02 00 00

1695

Itm paid to the Drummers when King
William went by¹

00 05 00

Itm paid to M^r Lee for new makeing
the Waits Badges, and one of the
Sargeants Mace and a Chamberlaines
staff

06 15 00

1718

Common Hall, held September 5th 1718 Upon the
mo^{con} of M^r Mayor it is ordered for the future that att
the Hunting feaste, which is yearly on Easter Munday,
the Company of 24^{te} in their Formalty, attend M^r
Mayor into the feild if the weather permitt, according
to the antient Custome and what Entertainm^t shall be
given that day shall be att the Charge of the Mayor
only, upon the fforfeiture of 20th the late Additional
Sallary² [Hall Book, p 214]

1720

Common Hall, held 2nd Sept 1720 Whereas ffourty
shillings has been the Antient Customary allowance
from the Corporation for the Towne Plate att the
annual Horse Race It is now determined, agreed on,
and Enacted by a great majority of this Hall, that the
said Antient Custome of allowing ffourty shillings to
the said plate be now restored for this present year &

¹ In the latter part of October He visited the Earl of Stamford at Bradgate Park about this period

² See Appendix

be Established and made firm for the future to be
ffourty shillings and no more out of the Town Stock

On the present occaſon of this Horse Race itt is
agreed and resolved that whereas M^r Mayor hath
voluntarily offered to Contribute tenn shillings towards
the makeing the ffourty shillings ffive pounds, to the
Encourageing the said plate It is ordered and agreed
that every Alderman, or Member of the ffour-and-
Twenty, shall pay one shilling, and every Coſmon
Counſellman, or Member of the Eight-and-fforty, shall
pay sixpence a pece to be immediately collected, and
on refusall thereof shall forfeite and pay ffive shillings
to the Chamber of the Town [Hall Book]

1722

At a Common Hall, held on the 14th day of July
It is ordered that the present Mayor and all¹ future
Mayors shall not let the Town Hall to any players for
any shows whatever, nor to any dancing-masters for
balls, without the consent of a Common Hall [Hall
Book]

1736

At a Common Hall held on the 9th day of January,
it is ordered—That M^r Herbert's Company of Players
have the use of the Town Hall, making good all
damages, and Paying five pounds to M^r Mayor for the
use of the Poor¹ [Hall Book]

1741

At a Common Hall held on the 3rd day of July,
1741 It is ordered that ten pounds be paid by the

¹ See Appendix

Chamberlains out of the Town Stock towards the Horse Race Purse of 50^l to be run for this present year, and that M^r Langton have the use of the Town Hall during the time of the Races for the accommodation of the Gentlemen and Ladies, makeing good all Damage
[*Hall Book*]

1749

Paid for prosecuting one Richardson,
and others, Sharpers, by pricking at a
game called Pricking in the Old Hat 6s 10d





APPENDIX

1537 — *The Lord Secretary's Players*

IT is uncertain to which of two noblemen, who successively held the office of "Lord Secretary," the patronage of this company of players is to be assigned. The first of these noblemen was Thomas Cromwell, afterwards created Lord Cromwell and Earl of Essex, who was Secretary of State from 1533, to July 2nd, 1536, when he was succeeded by Sir Thomas Wriothesley, afterwards created Baron Wriothesley, and three years later (1547), Earl of Southampton, and who was the grandfather of Henry, the third Earl, whose name has been rendered famous as the friend and patron of Shakespeare.

Although Cromwell had ceased to hold the Secretaryship of State the year before this payment to the players was made, it is probable that they were his retainers, as, at the dissolution, he obtained a grant of the Manor and Abbey of Launde in this county, which became his occasional residence, as it was after his decease of his son Gregory, Lord Cromwell, who, dying there of the plague in July, 1551, was buried in the Chapel of the Priory, where his monument still remains.

1547 — *Sir Henry Parker's Players*

THE patron of this company of players, Sir Henry Parker, Lord Morley, was himself a writer for the stage, for Bale reports that, in addition to many verses, he was the author of several "comedies and tragedies," none of which, however, have come down to us. One of his chief works now extant, is a translation of the "Triumphs of Petrarch," and others are

preserved with the Royal MSS in the British Museum. A list of his writings, which are numerous, has been given by Horace Walpole, in his "Royal and Noble Authors," (vol 1, p 314) We learn from Sir F Madden's "Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess (afterwards Queen) Mary," "that it was this nobleman's practice annually to present a book of his own composition to the Princess."

Anthony Wood says he was living an ancient man, and in esteem among the nobility in the latter end of the reign of Henry VIII, and from this early mention of his company of players visiting Leicester, we may presume that he was among the warmest patrons of the stage at the period.

According to Burke's "Vicissitudes of Families," (vol III, p 343), the Lords Morley were descended from the royal house of Scotland, through Cicely, the third daughter and one of the coheresses of John Bahol, King of Scotland.

The Sir Henry Parker now under notice was succeeded by his grandson of the same name, as Lord Morley in 1555, who married the Lady Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Earl of Derby, whose players also frequently visited Leicester. Other entries of payments to the theatrical servants of the family of Parker, Lords Morley, will be found under other years in the accounts.

1548 — *The Lord Protector's Players*

COLLIER ("Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 140) says that "it is not at all unlikely that on the accession of Edward VI, the Protector, who assumed all the authority of king, took into his pay at least some of the discharged players of Henry VIII." It is probable that the company whose visit to Leicester is here recorded was thus constituted.

1568 — *The Gossip's Feast, &c*

GOSSIP, or god-sib, is a Saxon word signifying *cognata ex parte dei*, or god-mother, although it has now become the appellation for any idle person.

A good definition of its original meaning is given by Master Richard Verstegan, in his "Restitution of Decayed Intelligence"

(ch vii) He says, "Our Christian ancestors, understanding a spiritual affinity to grow between the parents and such as undertooke for the child at baptisme, called each other by the name of *god-sib*, which is as much as to say, that they were *sb* together, that is, *of kn* together through God. And the child, in like manner, called such his God-fathers, or God-mothers."

The Gossip's feast at churchings was a very ancient English custom, we read of the practice of celebrating this religious rite with feasting as early as 1437 (Compotus Tho Dom Clifford, anno 15 Hen VI), and Harrison in his description of Britain in "Holinshead's Chronicles" (one of Shakespeare's text books), complains of the excessive feasting, as well at other festive meetings as at "Purifications of Women," and many references to it are to be met with in various works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As might be expected, it is a custom frequently mentioned by Shakespeare and other dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Thus, in the "Comedy of Errors," (act v, sc 1), we have the following allusion to it —

•

"*Abbess* Twenty-five years have I but gone in travail
Of you, my sons, nor, till this present hour,
My heavy burdens are delivered
The duke, my husband, and my childien both,
And you the calendars of their nativity,
Go to a *gossip's feast*, and go with me,
After so long grief, such nativity'
Duke With all my heart, *I'll gossip at this feast*"

And again, in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," (act ii, sc 1), that mischievous sprite, Puck, says —

"Sometime lurk I in a *gossip's bowl*
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her wither'd dew lap pour the ale"

And once more, not to multiply instances, we find Capulet ("Romeo and Juliet," act iii, sc 5), saying to the Nurse —

"Peace, you mumbling fool!
Utter your gravity o'er a *gossip's bowl*,
For here we need it not"

Warton describes the "gossip's bowl" as the old English Wassail-cup

The use of music at weddings has been incidentally mentioned in the Introduction, in connection with the Town Waits, and several entries illustrative of the custom will be found among the Extracts. The bridal procession to and from church was usually led by musicians, and to this custom, also, numerous allusions are made by writers of the age. Ben Jonson, among other references to it, makes Clench, in the "Tale of a Tub," say —

"Your wedding dinner
Is starv'd without the music "

In one of the regulations of the Corporation respecting the Waits (p. 210 *ante*), the words "Bride houses" occur in connection with music at weddings—a term which is not given either by Nares or Halliwell.

1574 — *Hare-finder*

SHAKESPEARE makes use of this term in "Much Ado about Nothing," (act 1, sc 1), and, in so doing, has greatly puzzled his commentators.

He makes Benedick say that —

"Cupid is a good *hare-finder*, and Vulcan a rare carpenter "

Mr Charles Knight, in a note on this passage, summing up the want of success attending the attempts of his predecessors to explain the allusion, says that, "whatever it be, (it) must pass to the limbo of meaningless jokes—that is, jokes of which time has worn out the application." From this mention of the term, however, in our local records, it was one probably in common use in the midland counties in Shakespeare's time, and in the following lines, from Drayton's "Polyolbion," (song 23), we find it referred to in a manner which clearly indicates its meaning —

"The man whose vacant mind prepares him to the sport
The *Finder* sendeth out, to seekle out nimble Wat,—
Which crosseth in the field, each furlong, every flat,
Till he this pretty beast upon the form hath found
Then viewing for the course which is the fairest ground,
The greyhounds forth are brought, for coursing them in case,
And, choycely in the slip, one leading forth a brace,
The Finder puts her up, and gives her coursers' law"

There is a marginal note, "*The Harefinder*," at the second line

Shakespeare's meaning may thus be inferred to be, that, as the *Harefinder*, on finding the "pretty creature" on her form, puts her up to be chased by the huntsman, so Cupid may be said to "find," in each instance, that "pretty creature," woman, and "put her up" to the pursuit of the amorous hunter, man

1609 — *Mulberry Trees*

"IN 1609," says Mr J P Collier ("Works of Shakespeare," vol 1, p 182, note), "King James was anxious to introduce the mulberry (which had been imported about a century earlier) into general cultivation, and the records in the State Paper Office show that in that year letters were written upon the subject to most of the justices of peace and deputy lieutenants in the kingdom the plants were sold by the State at 6s the hundred. On the 25th of November, 1609, £935 were paid out of the public purse for the planting of mulberry trees 'near the palace of Westminster'." In the garden of Miss Miles's residence, extending from Cank-street to Silver-street in this town, there is standing a mulberry tree evidently of great age, which there is every probability is one of those planted in 1609.

It was doubtless at this period, and in consequence of the letters of the Privy Council, here mentioned, that the garden at New Place, Stratford, received that now world-famous tree,—

"Which, O my sweet Shakespeare, was planted by thee "

Would that it had met with the same protecting care that its contemporary at Leicester receives, although it has no poetical associations connected with it

1611 — *Letter from Thomas Shakespeare and others*

The following is the letter referred to in the Introduction (p 93, note), and in the Extracts (p 249, note) —

"Mr Major Theis are to signiffye vnto you howe that certayne of your towne of Liecester, videlicit, a younge fellowe

and towre or three weomen came hither vpon Saterdaye nighte laste, and vpon Sondae nighte the fellowe sickened of the plague, yt rose in his Gryne, w^{ch} beeinge discerned by the people wheare he laye, the[y] putt him forth of theire howse, whence he departed to come againe towards your Towne, but fell downe and died in our feildes, whearypon, wthout the especiall mercye of god, wee are in greate Danger, and must needs thinke there is very improvidente Respecte hadd of your Infected, letting them thus to staggale abroade to the herte of your Neighbors. In regarde wheareof, wee thoughte good to advertize you, not onlie of this accidente, but alsoe that you take order for the keepeing of your neigboures and Tradesmen at home, for excepte you preciselie certifie of theire safetie, and that the[y] doe not Inhabite neare wheare the sickness of the plague is, wee have resolved to keepe them whollye out of our Towne, boeth on Maiket Daisies and other tymes, vntyll yt please god to staine his hande touchinge that visitacion. And soe hopeinge you will not onlie publishe the effecte of this accidente, but alsoe our purpose of holdeinge your Tradesmen forth of our Towne, wth our hartye Comendacions, wee comitt you to god and reste your very loveinge neigbouerrs to vse

Postscripte. The name of the aboue named fellowe whoe is deceased and dead wth vs was John Yorke, and the name of one of the aboue named woemen is goodwiffe Hollowewell, whose servants the other younge woemen ware

The \ddagger marke of John Picrofte } Constables
The marke (\bigoplus) of Edwardre Bradgate }



Thomas Gent
Thomas Kirbye
Hen Flamell
Richard Wightman

[Addressed]

“ To the Worshippfull theire verye loveing
ffreind Mr John Mabbs
Maior of the Towne
of Leicester, D D ”

This letter, as will be seen, is without date, but it was evidently written in the summer of 1611 (when the plague was ravaging Leicester), both from the circumstance of its being found among the correspondence of that period, and also from the fact of its being addressed to Mr John Mabbs, who was mayor in that year

It is not so evident in what capacity Thomas Shakespeare signed the document at the head of his fellow townsmen, or colleagues in office

My first impression was that the five signatures were those of the two churchwardens and three overseers of the poor of Lutterworth, but further investigation has shown that this could not have been the case, for another letter from Lutterworth, dated 30th of November, 1611, respecting the distribution of Elkington's Charity, bears the signatures of "Edward Clements, *rector*," and of "George Ball" and "John Newcome, churchwardens." In a third paper of the same date, the name of "Henry Flamell of Lutterworth, *gent.*" occurs as a surety for one of the applicants for the charity money. As it will be seen hereafter that Thomas Shakespeare was also designated as "gentleman" in a legal document, and as this letter is countermarked by the two constables of Lutterworth, it is not impossible that he was in the Commission of the Peace (although, in that case, his proper designation would have been esquire), and that his signature was attached in that capacity. At all events, it is quite evident that he was a leading inhabitant of Lutterworth, and from the close proximity of his place of residence to the borders of Warwickshire and to Stratford-on-Avon, he was in all probability, as before remarked, a relative of the poet. Unfortunately, however, this relationship does not seem susceptible of direct proof. I had hoped to have been able to trace the connections of Thomas Shakespeare by means of the parish registers, &c., at Lutterworth, but having been courteously permitted to examine the whole of the contents of the parish chest at the church, I found to my regret that no register prior to 1653 has been preserved, and I could not find any trace of the name of Shakespeare in those records after that date.

Whilst these sheets are passing through the press, the discovery of another document bearing the signature of Thomas Shakespeare, has been recorded in "Notes and Queries" of

April 23rd, 1864 (pp 339-40), in an article headed "A New Shakespeare Bond."

By this document, under his hand and seal, dated the 27th of November, 1606, "Thomas Shakespeare of Lutterworth, in the county of Leic, gent," bound himself, his "heires, executors, and administrators, for the payment of twenty-five shillings and eighte pence to James Whitelocke of the Middle Temple, London, esquier, uppon the sixte daye of februarie nexte ensewinge." In recording the manner in which this document—"endoised in a handwriting of the time of James I, 'Shakespeare's Bond'"—was lately discovered among a long series of papers belonging to a nobleman, the discoverer adds that this Thomas Shakespeare of Lutterworth was "a Shakespeare who has hitherto, we believe, escaped the industry of Shakespearian investigators." This belief, however, is erroneous, as the foregoing letter addressed to the Mayor of Leicester was referred to in my paper on the "Ancient Records of Leicester," read before the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, in the year 1851, and published in the Transactions of the Society in 1855.

It is now, however, printed for the first time with a facsimile of the autograph of Thomas Shakespeare.

Whilst cordially endorsing the opinion of the discoverer of the bond, that all the readers of "Notes and Queries" will join him "in thanking the owner of this curious document for his liberality in giving it to the world," the smaller circle of readers of these pages will doubtless feel that their thanks are not the less due to the Mayor and Corporation of Leicester, for their liberality in allowing the rich stores of the Borough Archives to be made freely available for literary purposes.

1616 — *The Children of the Revels*

Of these juvenile actors Mr Collier says ("Annals of the Stage," vol 1, p 352), "Another company was also at this period (1604) taken under the protection of the Queen, viz, those who had been the Children of the Chapel under Elizabeth, and who, after James I came to the crown, were called the Children of her Majesty's Revels. On the 30th of January, 1603-4, a warrant was made out under the Privy Seal to ap-

point Edward Kirkham, Alexander Hawkins, Thomas Kendall, and Robert Payne, 'to provide, keep, and bring up a convenient number of children,' for the purpose of exhibiting 'plays and shews' before the Queen, and they were farther authorized to perform at the Blackfriars Theatre, or any other convenient place." No plays were to be performed by them which had not received the approbation and allowance of the celebrated poet, Samuel Daniel. This, no doubt, as has before been remarked, was that "eyry of children, little eyases that cry out on the top of question," mentioned in "Hamlet" (act II, sc 2), and of whose superior popularity Shakespeare complains.

Of this popularity we may judge by their giving two performances in Leicester, at the public expense, at an interval of a few months, receiving on the first occasion the unusually liberal gratuity of 30*s* equal to £7 or £8 in the money of the present day.

See also Collier, *ut supra*, pp. 280 1

1619 — *Etalon Motion*

THIS curious entry probably refers either to a *motion* or puppet play, on some subject of Italian history, or "the players that showed" it were Italians. We learn from the "Accounts of the Revels at Court" (pp. 78, 79), that in the year 1574 a company of Italian players accompanied Queen Elizabeth in her progress to Windsor and Reading. The nature of their performance is not mentioned, and we can only gather a general idea of it from the entries of "implements and expences in the progress." Among other articles which are mentioned we have "ladles and dishes to bear the lights at Windsor for the Italians," "a frame for a seat in a *pageant*," "lamb-skins for shepherds," "horse-tails for the wild-man's garment," "arrows for nymphs," "hire of a scythe for Satwin," &c, &c. It would thus seem that the performance was a pageant (possibly in dumb show), the characters represented being taken from the Roman Mythology. Chalmers, in his "Farther Account of the Early English Stage" ("Shakespeare's Works," ed. 1803, vol. II, p. 439), tells us that, during Elizabeth's reign, "Italians showed their tricks daily in our streets, and exhibited their dramas often in our halls." He adds, in a note, that a letter

was written on the 14th of July, 1573, by the Privy Council to the Lord Mayor of London, "to permit certain *Italian players* to make show of an instrument of *strange motions* within the city," and which order was repealed on the 19th of the same month Chalmers supposes that the *instrument of strange motions* was probably a theatrical automaton, which we may conclude represented a *motion* or puppet-show

In 1578, as we learn on the same authority, there was an Italian *Commediante*, named Droussiano, and his company, in London, who received a license to play within the city between the 18th of January and the first week in Lent. The nature of their performances is not anywhere stated, but it is possible that they might represent some extempore comedies, in which the Italians had great skill—these extempore plays being then known in England. They are mentioned in Ben Jonson's "Case is Altered," and other works of the period. Although not entirely without dialogue, they consisted, to a great extent, of *pantomime*, and hence our local scribe may have designated a similar performance by an Italian company in this town, at a later date, as an *Italian Motion*.

1619 — *The King's Players*

A PATENT under the Great Seal granted to this company on the 27th of March, 1619-20 (printed by Collier, vol 1, p 416, note), gives their names as follows — John Hemmings, Richard Burbage, Henry Condell, John Lowen, Nicholas Tooley, John Underwood, Nathaniel Field, Robert Benfield, Robert Gough, William Ecclestone, Richard Robinson, and John Shanks. Shakespeare, who had been a member of the company, had now been dead nearly four years.

Swynnerton and his Company of Players

THE master of this company was Thomas Swynnerton, and he is mentioned as one of the Queen's Players, in a patent of licence granted in April, 1609, by James I to the "Servants to our most dearely beloved wif Queene Anne," which has been printed for the first time in the "Papers of the Shakespeare

Appendix

Society" (vol iv, p 45) At the head of the Queen's Players at that time was Thomas Green, the townsman of Shakespeare, and the very distinguished actor, the other "sharers" being Christopher Beeston, Thomas Heywood, Richard Perkyns, Richard Pallant, *Thomas Swinnerton*, John Duke, Robert Lee, James Haulte, and Robert Beeston

This is the only mention I have discovered of the name of this Thomas Swinnerton, who visited Leicester with his company in 1619, but Walton ("History of English Poetry," vol iii, p 153, edit 8vo) mentions the grant in 1571 of a licence to a person of the name of *Swinton* (who it is not unlikely was of the same family), "to have and use some plays and games at or uppon nine severall sondaries," (see also Collier, vol 1, p 200) It appears from Heminge and Condell's edition of Shakespeare in 1623, that John Shakespeare had a son named Swynerton

Terry and his Company

I HAVE not succeeded in finding any mention of the name of this actor, although from this company of players "having large authority," he must have been of some note in his day, or he would not have been at its head

1622 — The Fortune Players

THIS was the company usually performing at the Fortune Theatre, in the parish of St Giles, Cripplegate It was a building eighty feet square, and was erected by Henslowe and Alleyn, the latter of whom afterwards became its sole proprietor

The visit of so important a company to the provinces in the early part of the year 1622, is explained by the fact that *The Fortune* was consumed by fire in December, 1621, and thus the actors had to shift for themselves during its re-building

Mr Chamberlain, in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, dated on the 15th of December, gives the following account of this catastrophe "On Sunday night here was a great fire at the Fortune, in Golding Lane, the first playhouse in this town It was quite burnt down in two hours, and all their apparel and

play-books lost, whereby these poor companions are quite undone" (Dr Buch's MSS., Brit. Mus., No. 4173)

The company performing there—originally the Earl of Worcester's Playeis, and afterwards "the Prince's Servants," of whom, as we have seen, Henslowe and Alleyn had been at the head—became, on the death of Prince Henry, the theatrical servants of the Prince Palatine, afterwards King of Bohemia, who had married the Princess Elizabeth

Mr Collier has printed ("Annals of the Stage," vol. 1, p. 380, note) a royal patent under the Great Seal, granted in 1613 to the Count Palatine's players, "to perform stage-plays, &c., &c., as well within their now usual howse called the Fortune, within our County of Middlesex, as also within any Towne halls or Moute halls, or other convenient places whatsoever within our realmes and dominions." The actors forming this company are thus enumerated in the patent—Thomas Downton, William Bird, Edward Juby, Samuel Rowle[y], Charles Massey, Humphrey Jeffes, Fink Grace, William Cartwright, Edward Colbrand, William Par, William Stratford, Richard Gunnell, John Shanck, and Richard Price

The warrant exhibited to the Mayor of Leicester on this occasion, "having the King's broad seal" attached, was doubtless the identical patent under the Great Seal above-mentioned, and, although the actors were not allowed to perform before the Mayor and Corporation, they received the liberal gratuity of 30s., probably on account of the heavy loss which they had sustained, this sum being represented in the present day by at least five times that amount

"Burned Sacke"

THIS entry reminds one of a passage of wit between Ben Jonson and Bishop Corbet, whose testimony we have elsewhere quoted as to the popularity of Richard Burbage in Leicestershire, in the character of "Richard III." The anecdote is given on the authority of L'Estrange—"Ben Jonson was at a taverne and in comes Bishoppe Corbett (but not so then) into the next roome, Ben Jonson calls for a quart of *raw* wine, gives it to the tapster 'Sirha,' sayes he, 'carry this to the gentleman in the next chamber, and tell him I sacrifice my service to him,' the fellow did so, and in those words

‘Friend,’ sayes Dr Cobett, ‘I thanke him for his love, but pr’y thee tell hym from me hee’s mistaken, for *sacrifices* are allwayes *burn’t*’” (Thom’s “Anecdotes and Traditions,” p 29)

1623 — *Watching according to the Council’s Letters*

In the Introduction (p 32, note) reference has been made, in connection with the municipal custom of “Setting the Watch,” to an original letter of Lord Burghley’s addressed to Secretary Walsingham, and which is amusingly illustrative of those scenes in “Much Ado about Nothing,” in which Dogberry and his associates figure, and shows, as Mr Collier truly observes, “how much to the life our great dramatist drew the characters he introduced”

As this curious document, which is entirely in the handwriting of Lord Burghley, has only been printed in the “Papers of the Shakespeare Society,” which are not easily accessible to the general reader, it is here given —

“Sir,—As I cam from London homward, in my coche, I sawe at every townes end the number of x or xii, standing, with long staves, and untill I cam to Enfeld I thought no other of them, but that they had stayd for avoyding of the rayne, or to drynk at some alehowse, for so they did stand under pentyces [penthouses] at ale howses But at Enfeld fyndyng a dozen in a plump, whan ther was no rayne, I bethought my self that they war appointed as watchmen, for the apprehendyng of such as are mussyng, and therupon I called some of them to me apart, and asked them wherfor they stood there? and one of them answered, ‘To take 3 yong men’ And demandyng how they should know the persons, one answered with these wordes ‘Marry, my Lord, by intelligence of ther favor’ ‘What meane you by that?’ quoth I ‘Marry,’ sayd they, ‘one of the partyes hath a hooked nose’ ‘And have you,’ quoth I, ‘no other mark?’ ‘No,’ sayth they And then I asked who apoynted them, and they answered one Banks, a Head Constable, whom I willed to be sent to me Suerly, sir, who so ever had the chardge from you hath used the matter negligently, for these watchmen stand so openly in plumps, as no suspected person will come neare them, and if they be no better instructed but to fynd 3 persons by one of them havyng a hooked nose, they

may miss thei of And thus I thought good to advertise yow, that the Justyces that had the chardg, as I thynk, may use the matter mo iue circumspектly

“From Theobaldes, 10 Aug , 1586,

Yours assuredly,

W Burghley

“To the R Honorable my verie loving frend, Sir Francis Walsingham, Knight, Hir Ma^{ts} Principall Secretary at London

hast }
hast } Post
hast }
hast }

“W Burghley ”

Mr Collier, after remarking that “we may presume, after this ‘post-haste’ injunction, that the messenger lost no time in placing the letter in Walsingham’s hands,” adds, “The event to which this letter relates occurred at the very season when I have supposed Shakespeare first came to London from Stratford-upon-Avon ” He also remarks, “It will be observed that the constables are represented by Lord Burghley as standing *under penthouses to avond the rain*, and it will be recollect that there is in ‘Much Ado about Nothing’ a singular, but of course mere accidental, coincidence of expression —

‘Stand thee close, then, under this penthouse, for it drizzles rain , ’

although these words are put into the mouth of Borachio to Conrade, and not assigned to any of the ‘watchmen’ ”

It will be seen by the entry in the Chamberlain’s Account, that at Leicester also, as well as in the towns through which Lord Burghley passed, “the watchmen stood so openly in plumps,” “at the town’s ends,” that no suspected person would be likely to come near them , a Dogberry-like arrangement at which we may well imagine the great Chancellor giving one of those grave and portentous shakes of the head, for which, according to “The Critic,” he was so famous

1624 —John Daniel

THIS actor, who attained some distinction in his profession, seems to have been one of the “Players of the Lady Elizabeth”

(the Queen of Bohemia), but he subsequently joined the company under the patronage of Prince Charles, afterwards Charles I, and—like those formerly in the service of Prince Henry—called “the Prince’s Players” On the 17th of July, 1615, in his capacity of one of the servants of Prince Charles, he obtained letters patent enabling him to bring up “a company of children and youths, in the quality of playing interludes and stage-plays”

This patent was followed in April, 1618, by what is termed in the indorsement of the original in the State Paper Office “a letter of assistance,” and in it we find mention by name of the company which, as “the Children of Bristol,” visited Leicester, with John Daniel at then head, in 1624. It was given on the ground that the previous patent had been “oppugned and resisted,” but in fact (according to Mr Collier) to authorise Daniel to assign his patent to others, if he thought fit, and to give authority to “Martin Slatier, John Edwards, and Nathaniel Clay (her Majesties servants) with their Associates, the bearers hereof, to play as aforesaid (as her Majesties servants of her *Royall Chamber of Bristol*),” to proceed to different parts of the kingdom, and to act in any play-houses, town halls, school-houses, and other convenient places, provided they did not continue in one place for more than fourteen days, and refrained from playing on the Sabbath *during Divine service*. The document has been printed at length (although incorrectly) by Chalmers, and, from the original, by Collier (“Annals of the Stage,” vol 1, p 412, note)

John Daniel was brother to the celebrated Samuel Daniel, the poet, the contemporary and rival of Shakespeare, and in the will of Samuel Daniel (or Danyel, as he himself spells it) dated the 4th of September, 1619, he terms him “my faithfull brother, John Danyell, whome I ordaine my sole executor”

It was perhaps to Samuel Daniel’s influence at Court that the grant of these patents was obtained in favour of his brother

Later in 1624, a payment was made “to the Prince’s servants, goeing by the name of the *Youths of Bristowe*”

Mr Townsend and his Fellous

THE Master of the Princess Elizabeth's players here referred to was John Townsend, to whom, in conjunction with Joseph Moore as "Stage Players," £30 were paid "upon the Councill's Warrant dated at Whitehall, 11 July, 1617, for acting three severall playes before his Majestye in his Jorney towards Scotland at the ordinary rates formerly allowed" (See Mr P Cunningham's Introduction to the "Revels at Court," p. xliv.)

1625 — One Slator and his Company

THERE can be no doubt that the person here commemorated as "one Slator," was Marten Slater, Slatier, or Slaughter (for the spelling of his name varies greatly), and who was not only an actor of some eminence, but also a dramatic poet. Little, however, is known of him beyond what is to be gathered, incidentally, from the contemporary "Diary of Philip Henslowe," with whom he was long and closely connected professionally, both as an actor and an author.

We first meet with his name about the year 1595, in a list of the principal actors then forming the company of the Earl of Nottingham, "Lord Admiral," at the head of which stands the name of Edward Alleyn, whilst that of "M. Slator" appears as the fifth of the company.

On the 22nd of June, 1596 (under the designation of Martin Slather), we find him borrowing £8 of Henslowe, which he was to repay on that day month, or else forfeit £16, and he bound himself to this "by takynge of a j^d upon and a sumsett"—whatever that might be,—Edward Alleyn and his wife (Henslowe's son-in-law and step-daughter) being witnesses. In the following month of November, among entries of money, "Lente unto my lord admeiall players at several tymes," we have —

Lent unto marten slater, to bye coper lace and
ffrenge for the play of valtegei [Vortigern?]
the 28 of novemb^r 1596

xxxx^s

and on the following day a further sum of xxv^s "for lace and other things" for the same play, whilst two other sums are recorded as having been lent to "Marten" at other times about the same period—one of them being lent to him "to fetch Fletcher," supposed by Malone to refer to Fletcher the poet.

In the month of July, 1597, we meet with the following memorandum in the margin of the "Diary," "Marten Slather went for the company of my lord admiral's men, the 18 of July 1597" Upon this the editor, Mr J P Collier, observes that, "It is not easy to explain the meaning of this memorandum, because Henslowe is recording the performances of the Lord Admiral's men Possibly we ought to read 'for' *from*, and understand that, at this date, and for a time, Martin Slatter, Slaughter, or Slather, went *from* the company On the other hand (he continues), as it is recorded at the same date that the Master of the Revels was paid, it is not unlikely that Henslowe thus registered that Martin Slater had gone to him for the purpose, on behalf of the association We do not learn elsewhere (he adds) that he ceased to be one of the Lord Admiral's men, and *he seems to have been much too useful to have been readily parted with by Henslowe*," (p 90, note)

On the 8th of March in the following year, we find Henslowe lending money to William Borne, Thomas Downton, and Gabriel Spencer, "about the sewt twext Martin and them," and Mr Collier thinks that the fact of there being some dispute at law between Slaughter and these other players may confirm the supposition of his having temporarily quitted the company But, however this may have been, we have his name once more appearing in Henslowe's Diary on the 23rd of July, 1604, as borrowing for a month the sum of £5 (equal to £25 or £30 in the present day), which was delivered to his wife, Edward Alleyn, once more, being witness to the payment

Among the plays of which he was the author, and for the production of which we find several payments made to him by Henslowe, were the following—"Hercules," in two parts, "Pythagoras," "Focasse," "Alexander and Lodowick" None of these works are now known, and as the right to perform them was purchased by Henslowe, it is probable that the copies of them perished in the fire when the Fortune Theatre was destroyed

We have seen that Slater's name appears in the second patent as one of the three players, "her Majestie's servants," associated with John Daniel as leaders or traineis of the juvenile company, called the Children (or Youths) of Bristol This is the only other notice of him which we have met with until we find his name appearing in our local records as the leader of "the King's Players," and although we know not how he

attained it, the position which he then occupied (although perhaps partly due to his standing as a dramatic writer) shows that he must have risen at that time to the first rank amongst the actors of the day

1626 — *Ellis Geste, Thomas Swinerton, Arthuret Grimes, and others*

NONE of these actors are mentioned in Collier's "Annals of the Stage." Some particulars respecting Swinnerton will be found *ante*, under the year 1619

Of Ellis Geste, or (as it is written in the Account for 1629) Guest, and Arthuret Grimes, we find no mention in any work to which we have access, and probably their names now appear for the first time in print as members of the company patronised by the Master of the Revels

1628 — *Knight and his Company*

WE have no record in Shakespearian literature of any actor of this name being the leader of a company of players in the provinces, as here noticed. There was, however, a person of the same name, and not improbably the same individual, who, in 1633, was the prompter (or, as he was also called, book-keeper and book-holder) of the King's players, at the Blackfriars Theatre

Malone, in his "Historical Account of the English Stage," has quoted the following entry respecting him from the manuscript account of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels — "Received of Knight, for allowing of Ben Johnson's play called 'Humours reconcil'd, or the Magnetick Lady,' to bee acted, this 12th of Octob 1632, £2 0 0"

And Mr Collier, in his "Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare," has given the following note directed by Sir Henry Herbert to Knight, and written upon the play, "The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed," which had been sent to him to be allowed —

“Mr Knight,

In many things you have saved me labour, yet, where your judgment or pen failed you, I have made bold to use mine Purge their parts, as I have the book, and I hope every hearer and player will think that I have done God good service, and the quality no wrong, who hath no greater enemies than oaths, profaneness, and public ribaldry, which for the future I do absolutely forbid to be presented unto me in any play book, as you will answer it at your peril.

“21st October, 1633”

On the 20th of March, 1615-16, an “Edward Knight” appears as the last of three witnesses (the other being Robert Daborne, the dramatist, and Thomas Foster) to an agreement between Edward Alleyn and the company of the Prince Palatine’s players, preserved at Dulwich College, and printed by Collier in his “Memoirs of Edward Alleyn,” p 127

Mr Kite, a Player

WE find no mention of any player of this name, possibly it may be intended for Knight

1629 —*Mr Moore and his Company*

THE leader of these players at this period (who still retained their old title of “the Lady Elizabeth’s Players”), Joseph Moore, has already been noticed under the year 1624, as receiving in the year 1617, in conjunction with John Townsend, the sum of £30 for three plays represented before James I, during his progress to Scotland

In Collier’s “Memoirs of Edward Alleyn” (p 98) is printed a bond entered into, on the 29th of August, 1611, between Henslowe and the players of the Prince Henry, for the fulfilment of certain articles which have not survived. This document has appended to it the names of all the Prince’s players at that time, being twelve in number, the head of them being the John Townsend before-mentioned, and the eleventh, Joseph Moore. It will thus be seen that he had greatly improved his position in the interim, by now appearing at the head of the Prince’s players

Dishley and his Fellows.

THE company here referred to was that under the patronage of Lord Dudley, which, as will be seen on reference to previous years, frequently visited this town. Their patron was Edward, son of Edward (and grandson of Sir John Sutton) Lord Dudley by his second wife, the Lady Jane, daughter of Edward Earl of Derby. We learn the fact of Dishley being the leader of this nobleman's theatrical retainers from a very curious work, printed for the Chetham Society, under the editorship of Mr Harland, entitled "The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths" (1582 to 1621), in which, among other payments to "Disley," or "Distile," we have the following — "October 7, 1615, given to Disley and his companie, *my Lord Dudleye his plaers, 30s*" The editor remarks that the name "does not occur in Mr Payne Collier's 'Annals of the Stage,' or in Mr P Cunningham's 'Revels at Court,' but he seems to have been well known in Lancashire, for the company is called by his name oftener than by Lord Dudley's"

Mr Fenner, the King's Poet

THIS was William Fenner, or, as the name was frequently written, Vennor, an actor at the Swan, on which pretence he styled himself "his Majesty's servant." He performed at that theatre in the melodrama written by himself, entitled "England's Joy," a kind of pageant, once very popular, comprehending in dumb show the chief events in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and concluding with her apotheosis in great state, when, "being crowned by the sun, moon, and stars, she is taken up into heaven."

It seems to have been produced prior to the Queen's death, for in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries is a broadside with the following title — "The plot of the play, called 'England's Joy' To be playd at the Swan, this 6 of November 1602," and which appears to have been intended to make the matter more intelligible to the audience. The piece is alluded to by several contemporary writers. Thus in Ben Jonson's Masque of "Love Restored" (1610-11), in a dialogue between Plutus, as Cupid, and Robin Goodfellow, *Robin* says "I would fain know if there be a masque or no" *Plutus*

"There is none, nor shall be, sir, does that satisfy you?"
Robin Goodfellow "Slight, a fine trick! a piece of 'England's Joy' this!"

And Taylor the Water Poet, the contemporary and rival of Fenner, and with whom, as a poet, he was about on an equality, describes him as

"Poor Old Vennor, that plain dealing man,
 Who acted 'England's Joy' at the Old Swan "

Although Fenner really possessed but little poetic power, he was looked upon as a noted man in his day, for we find that many ascribed to him the authorship of a very excellent song which "has never, in its way, been surpassed," and which was really written by Mr (afterwards Bishop) Corbet, as a burlesque upon the Latin poem presented to James I on his visit to Cambridge

Fenner is thus referred to in "A Cambidge Madrigal, in Answer to the Oxford Ballad," &c —

"A ballad late was made, but God knows who's the penner,
 Some say the rhyming Sculler, and others say 'twas *Fenner*,
 But those that know the sleight do smell it by the choler,
 And do maintain it was the brain of some young Oxford Scholar "

Both pieces are given at length in Nichols's "Progresses and Processions of James I" (vol. iii, p. 66), and in the same work (vol. iii, pp. 140-165) is reprinted Fenner's "Descriptions, or, a True Relation of Certain and Divers Speeches spoken before the King and Queene's Most Excellent Majestie, the Prince his Highnesse, and the Lady Elizabeth's Grace, by William Fennor, his Majestie's Servante" This tract, which was printed in 1616, is now very rare

It is to be presumed that the title of "*the King's Poet*," given to him in the above entry in our accounts, when he was paid 3*s* 4*d* "to pass the town without playing," was assumed by him in consequence of his having recited some of his "Descriptions" before the King at Whitehall and elsewhere—and which title must not be confounded with that of Poet Laureate, which office was then worthily held by a true poet, Ben Jonson. He was generally designated as "Fenner the rhymster" One of Taylor the Water Poet's pieces was entitled "A Cast over the Water by John Taylor, given gratis to Will Fennor,

the rimer, from London to the King's Bench " He and Fenner were continually at a war of words

It has not hitherto, we believe, been recorded that Fenner travelled about the country as a player (probably of "England's Joy," and others of his own productions), this notice of him in that character, therefore, supplies an additional fact in his history

1633 — *Mr Perrie (or Perry), a Player*

No such name is mentioned in the "Annals of the Stage" or elsewhere, so far as can be ascertained. Possibly the entry may refer to the same individual whose visit with his company is recorded in 1619, under the name of Terry, for many similar mistakes were made by our old account keepers. A Thomas *Derrie* is mentioned in 1612 as the Jester to the Queen of James I

1718—*Easter Hunting on the Danes' Hills*

As a pendant to this, our last entry from the town records on this custom, we give the following paragraph from a local newspaper, descriptive of the manner in which this once great holiday of the people of Leicester was celebrated ten or a dozen years ago —

"THE EASTER HOLIDAYS—The streets of the town were thronged on Monday and Tuesday last with an unusual number of holiday people in their very best garb, though we did not observe so many visitors by special train as we have done on previous occasions. In the afternoon of Monday, "Dane Hill Fair" was crowded with the youth of both sexes of the working class, of whom there were thousands in the Bower and adjoining closes, amusing themselves with games of various kinds, and visiting the old tree which occupies the site of what is said to have been the retreat of Black Anna—that mysterious female, whose solitary mode of life, weird influence, and cruel practices are said to have made her in bygone times the terror of the people of Leicester. The upper part of the road passing by Danett's Hall, was crowded with gingerbread and other

stalls, the promoters of the sale of edibles apparently doing a 'rattling trade' in their commodities "

And the following lines from the pen of our townsman, Mr Dare, descriptive of the same scene, and which appeared at the same period, enable us to place on record "in measured verse," the various amusements then practised —

SONNFT,
WRITTEN ON THE DANE HILLS, NEAR LEICESTER,
ON EASTER MONDAY

Old hills, how changed your aspect! Now, once where
The fierce Dane crouched to seize his wily foe,
Young gals with nursing infants seek the blow
Of healthful breezes, and the venturous fair,
With bashful boldness, from your summits dare
To plunge into the hollows steep and low
Like stars their ankles, many twinkling, show,
Like wreaths of sun set light their loosened hair
Here sturdy youths not battle seek, but sport,
And tempt the sinewy leap or urge the race,
And town worn toilers, with weak step, resort
To breathe new life, and many a lovely face
To wooers listening, throned as in Love's court,
Sit on your green heights, or with slow feet trace

April 9, 1852

Within the last few years, owing to the enclosure of the foot paths which formerly led through the open fields, and the erection of villas on part of the land, the frequenters of the Fair, the last relic of the Easter Hunting, are now, in a great measure, restricted to the Fosse road

1736 — *Mr Herbert's Company of Players.*

This and the preceding entry in 1722 show that after plays ceased to be performed in the yards of inns, the Town Hall still continued to be the usual place in which they were represented, as it was not until fourteen years later that Leicester, for the first time, possessed a theatre, properly so-called

In the spring of 1750 Mr John Bass erected a building in the Haymarket, called, at first, the Assembly Rooms, but afterwards known as the Old Play House, and which, although it had long been diverted from its original purposes and served,

in part, the baser use of a store-room for hay and straw, was only removed a year or two ago, during the Eastgate improvements. At a Common Hall, held on the 9th of February, 1750, the Corporation agreed to allow Mr Bass to erect four or more columns upon the ground belonging to the town at the east end of his land, he paying for the same an annual rent of one shilling, and upon these columns the floor of a portion of the Assembly Room was supported. Mr William Gardiner, in his "Music and Friends" (vol. III, p. 41), describes the room as being "fitted up with boxes, pit, and gallery," and says, "Our townsman, Chamberlain, a basket-maker living near the East Gates, was a clever facetious fellow, who occasionally convened a company of comedians at Leicester. He was an amateur actor, as well as being manager, and as a patron of art, invited young aspirants to the stage to make their *début* in Leicester." In this "cockpit" of a theatre Mrs Siddons, who then had not achieved any eminence in her profession, appeared with her husband in 1778.

The "new theatre," together with the present Assembly Rooms, at the upper end of the Market-place, was erected just half a century later—the Theatre having been opened in March, 1800, with a prologue written by Mr Henry Carter, the profit of the first night's performance being devoted by the manager to the general subscription in behalf of the poor.

This theatre was for some years under the management of Mr Macready, father of the eminent tragedian, who, in all probability, made his first appearance as an actor upon its stage, to which he several times returned when in the height of his fame, and which had also been trod by Edmund Kean, Charles Matthews the elder, Liston, and other "stars," in an age unusually rich in great actors.

This theatre was removed in 1836, the present one being, in part, erected on its site, and which was opened on the 12th of September in that year, with a prologue spoken by Miss Sarah Booth—an old favourite with Leicester audiences of that generation. Having thus traced the various "local habitations" of the drama in Leicester, we finally take our leave of the subject.



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